

## **Brazil: not one, but many and multiple languages<sup>1</sup>**

### **Tipo de contribuição Relatório de experiência**

Bruna Franchetto<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** The world, the Americas, and Brazil are made up of many languages. Bilingualism and multilingualism are a capital, a heritage, not only of the individual but also of collectives and of all humanity. This wealth is in crisis and decline; the symptoms of loss are clear. Monolingualism impoverishes and destroys the foundations of individual, collective, and plural knowledge. On the other hand, signs of resilience, revival, and the awakening of languages are also before us. In its first section, this article offers an overview of the vitality of Indigenous languages in Brazil and the efforts to document them, a prerequisite for their preservation or revitalization. The second section contains a critical reflection on the role of the linguist in a scenario of growing mobilizations for decolonial science and other epistemologies, especially on the part of Indigenous activism and its leading role. In this context, experiences of emergency documentation and the revival of languages previously labeled as extinct are briefly reported. On the map of original languages, the gaps left by colonizing oppression are beginning to be filled by new languages and surprising resilience.

**KEYWORDS:** Indigenous Languages. Linguistic Documentation. Linguistic Policies.

**RESUMO:** O mundo, as Américas e o Brasil são de por muitas línguas. O bilinguismo e o multilinguismo são um capital, um patrimônio, não apenas do indivíduo, mas também de coletivos e de toda a humanidade. Essa riqueza está em crise e declínio; os sintomas da perda são claros. O monolinguismo empobrece e destrói os fundamentos do conhecimento individual, coletivo e plural. Por outro lado, sinais de resiliência, renascimento e despertar das línguas também estão diante de nós. Em sua primeira seção, este artigo oferece um panorama da vitalidade das línguas indígenas no Brasil e dos esforços para documentá-las, um pré-requisito para sua preservação ou revitalização. A segunda seção contém uma reflexão crítica sobre o papel do linguista em um cenário de crescentes mobilizações para uma ciência decolonial e outras epistemologias, especialmente por parte do ativismo indígena e seu protagonismo. Nesse contexto, são brevemente relatadas experiências de documentação emergencial e de renascimento de línguas antes rotuladas como extintas. No mapa das línguas originais, as lacunas deixadas pela opressão colonizadora começam a ser preenchidas por novas línguas e uma resiliência surpreendente.

---

<sup>1</sup> The title of this article reproduces that of two presentations by the author at two recent scientific events, presentations reworked and synthesized here. The first presentation, as a keynote speaker, was at the 1st Workshop on Endangered and Minoritized Languages, held at the University of Minho (Portugal) on May 8 and 9, 2025. The second presentation was at the Museu da Língua Portuguesa, in São Paulo, on May 19, 2025, at the event "Linguistic Diversity in Brazil: Preservation and Revitalization."

<sup>2</sup> PhD in Social Anthropology, professor at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), Graduate Program in Social Anthropology (PPGAS), Rio de Janeiro. [bfranchetto@yahoo.com.br](mailto:bfranchetto@yahoo.com.br), <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1324-6547>, investigação, escrita, edição e revisão.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Línguas Indígenas. Documentação linguística. Políticas linguísticas.

**RESUMEN:** El mundo, las Américas y Brasil son ricos en lenguas. El bilingüismo y el multilingüismo son un capital, un patrimonio, no solo del individuo, sino también de los colectivos y de toda la humanidad. Esta riqueza está en crisis y declive; los síntomas de pérdida son evidentes. El monolingüismo empobrece y destruye los cimientos del conocimiento individual, colectivo y plural. Por otro lado, también se vislumbran signos de resiliencia, renacimiento y despertar de las lenguas. En su primera sección, este artículo ofrece un panorama de la vitalidad de las lenguas indígenas en Brasil y los esfuerzos por documentarlas, un prerrequisito para su preservación o revitalización. La segunda sección contiene una reflexión crítica sobre el papel del lingüista en un escenario de crecientes movilizaciones por la ciencia decolonial y otras epistemologías, especialmente por parte del activismo indígena y su protagonismo. En este contexto, se describen brevemente experiencias de documentación de emergencia y el resurgimiento de lenguas previamente etiquetadas como extintas. En el mapa de las lenguas originarias, los vacíos dejados por la opresión colonizadora comienzan a ser llenados por nuevas lenguas y una resiliencia sorprendente.

**PALABRAS-CLAVE:** Lenguas indígenas. Documentación linguística. Políticas linguísticas.

## **Introduction**

Brazil is a land of linguistic resistance and diversity, where around 170 original languages still survive, according to surveys by reliable linguists.<sup>3</sup> This number is small compared to the landscape 500 years ago: during colonial times, at least 80% of the languages of native peoples were erased. 170 languages are survivors with varying degrees of vitality, distributed across 28 linguistic families, in addition to at least a dozen isolate languages and a creole one (Kheúól).

Different estimates of the number of languages come from surveys carried out by Brazilian linguists and from the last official Census carried out in 2010, which registered the existence, by self-declaration, of more than 270 languages. We are now waiting for the final results of the Census carried out in 2022, which should be released by the end of 2025 and which will certainly show a greater number of languages (and ethnic groups). Numbers are not self-evident, but they must be interpreted. Behind the numbers set by the Census, there are other factors, which go beyond the objective calculations of

---

<sup>3</sup> An updated and in-depth picture of the situation of Indigenous languages in Brazil and the documentation work can be seen in Galúcio (in press).

scientists. Among these factors are political demands, assertions of identity and representations around what constitutes a language. I will return to this in the last part of the article.

This impressive linguistic diversity continues to be silenced, with varied strategies, by the State, by missions, by the media and in the so-called 'educational system'. The sovereignty of a single language (Portuguese) has been maintained at any cost by the conquerors who formed the 'nation' called 'Brazil'. Furthermore, all the original languages that exist today are threatened in their survival and many of them are in decline, spoken by only a few elderly people, whose children and grandchildren no longer speak the language of their ancestors. The next generation will certainly be monolingual in the dominant language.

However, while on the one hand we mourn the losses, on the other we celebrate the resilience of those who endured the pain of five centuries of colonization to get here. We celebrate the emergence of new languages, the revival of those that are waking up from their slumber, those that are emerging from their secrets, those that appropriated the colonial Portuguese to give rise to varieties now claimed as Indigenous languages, those that are increasingly occupying the media, music, protest, art, and literature.

## **1. What we have done ?**

Looking to the last 20 years, at least, what we have done, in Brazil, in order to safeguard the existing linguistic diversity? Research and documentation projects have grown a lot, in a gigantic effort despite the limitations of human and financial resources, but have reached less than half of the languages, being optimistic.

Speaking of linguistic documentation, we had the privilege of having projects supported by the largest international institutions, such as DoBeS (Endangered Languages Documentation Program), National Science Foundation (exclusive for US citizens), Endangered Languages Fund, among others. Brazilian institutions must be mentioned : CNPq (National Counsel for Research and Technological Development), agencies of some states of the federation, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Culture, some universities. Everything possible was done, considering that, in Brazil, there is no State policy aimed at safeguarding Indigenous languages, with, few exceptions, like the National Inventory of Linguistic Diversity (INDL) by the Ministry of

Culture, the Program for the Documentation of Indigenous Languages (ProDoclin), which was developed from 2010 to 2025 by the Museu do Índio-FUNAI-RJ with UNESCO, and, last but not least, at the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi-MPEG.

The work done by ProDoclin and MPEG can be characterized as a Brazilian inflection of the linguistic documentation, to the extent that it aims : (i) To promote the documentation of Indigenous languages and cultures, widening the chances of their survival ; (ii) To consolidate the documentation through the empowering of Indigenous researchers and the training of non-Indigenous researchers, in collaborative projects ; (iii) To implement digital archives in documentation centers inside Indigenous areas as well as in Brazilian public institutions ; (iv) The establishment of rules for access to digital collections and their products, as well as precepts of ethical conduct.

Let me tell you a little more about ProDoclin, of which I was scientific coordinator until 2025. During the first phase of ProDoclin (2009-2012), 13 languages have been documented and workshops in Indigenous villages and at the Museu do Índio have been realized for the training of Indigenous researchers. Among the results we can highlight : multimedia digital archives, being that the original recordings are deposited in Brazilian public institutions and in local Indigenous centers; sociolinguistic surveys; lexical database; scientific publications; materials for Indigenous schools and exhibitions. In the second and third phases (2013-2025), our work focused on the production of Pedagogical Grammars of 11 languages, five of which have already been published and delivered to their speakers. Between 2018 and 2025, ProDoclin developed 11 Multimídia Digital Dictionaries on a new platform called JAPIIM.

ProDoclin has been a partner of the linguists of the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi, who did a long and enormous work since the end of the eighties, improving linguistic descriptions and the training of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers in methodologies for the documentation. The ALIM-Archive of indigenous languages includes the digital archives of 85 Amazonian languages, the non-verbal modalities of 3 languages and digital community-based dictionaries.

I cannot fail to mention two other Brazilian initiatives that are expanding and diversifying the horizon of linguistic documentation in Brazil. The Tycho Brahe platform for linguistic corpora, developed by linguists at UNICAMP and which already includes two Indigenous languages (Kadiweu and Nheengatu). Far from the Brazilian southeast,

the documentation of languages of the northeastern Amazon is going forward at the Oiapoque binational campus (Federal University of Amapá), and at the Kuahi Museum.

We can certainly say that the documentation projects that follow the so-called current best practices have had positive impacts, such as the change of attitudes towards the native languages, the strengthening of the bonds between generations, the empowerment of young Indigenous researchers, and the raising of new Indigenous filmmakers.

As an answer to the question that is the title of this section, we have done and are doing much more than we imagined possible with the scarce resources available, human and financial, to document the languages of Indigenous peoples, all endangered, with the aim of storing knowledge and with the desire to protect them. However, it is still not enough. More and new challenges lie ahead for documentation efforts.

What's special about the Americas? The experiences of North and South American DoBeS projects, especially Brazilian and Argentinean, led us to some relevant observations listed below (Franchetto; Rice, 2014).

- (i) The variable status of languages, some with very few speakers, all older, and others with speakers of all generations.
- (ii) Indigenous communities demand observance of the OCAP principles: OCAP: ownership, control, access, and possession of the knowledge and data collected by documentation projects that reach them, imposing themselves on local choices and practices.
- (iii) The demands for language revitalization and reawakening.

Concerning the existence of a great variation in transmission of the languages, here are a few examples from Brazil:

Among the Kuikuro (Upper Xingu Karib Language), all children speak the language, but bilingualism (Portuguese) is growing.

Among the Haliti-Paresi (Arawak), most children speak the language, not all, and bilingualism dominates.

Among the Wa'ikhana (Eastern Tukano), most children don't speak the language, with a clear shift to Yepahmasã (Tukano), ongoing efforts for vitalization.

In the case of Sakurabiat (Tupi), a critically endangered language, with just few speakers and interrupted transmission, documentation and partial vitalization are trying to bring the language back.

The Guató language (isolate) survives only in the memories of two “reminders”; emergency documentation is fighting against time.

The language of the Pataxó (Macro-Jê) was considered “extinct”, but the Pataxó communities are committed to its “retomada”, through the (re)construction of Patxohã, considered as the ancestral language.

I would like to report in a little more detail the experience of “emergency” documentation of the Guató language, that began in 2016 in the wetlands of southern Brazil, a region known as the Pantanal.

There was an urgent demand by a group of Guató descendants to recover elements of the language as they sought to reoccupy a traditional territory with their existence recognized by the Brazilian state. It had long been said that there were no more Guató in Mato Grosso, and none of the descendants who were gathered in the Bahia dos Guató Farm had any memory of the language.

A corpus was hurriedly put together from different historical sources; words and sentences in a kind of neo-Guató were recorded and began to be spoken by young people. With these words and sentences, in a performance of identity with desired, but unrealized, political consequences, the authorities were welcomed – police officers, lawyers, prosecutors who visited Bahia dos Guató to testify the occupation of the land, looking at the possibility of proposing a new Indigenous territory (Franchetto; Godoy, 2017).

Kristina Balykova and Gustavo Godoy, two young researchers, decided to continue and widen the work of documentation and went after these two elders who might still be able to speak Guató (Godoy; Balykova, 2022). Vicente Caetano (Djoguapó) lived by himself on the mouth of the São Lourenço River. Eufrásia Ferreira (Djáríkua) lived in the miserable periphery of the city of Corumbá, close to the Bolivian border. The third speaker, Vicente’s brother, was found more recently. Eufrásia and Vicente learned Guató in their childhood. They have no ascendant or descendant kinspeople. The language lay dormant in their minds until 2016, when it began to be revived in meetings with the researchers of the documentation project, who took Eufrásia to meet Vicente in 2018. They had not seen each other in over thirty years. Vicente was skittish. The memories bothered him, made him suffer, but the persistence of the researchers who visited him

regularly finally subdued him. Eufrásia met these same researchers with a wide smile and offers of fried fish. She never stopped smiling, occasionally giggling; her memories surprised her and comforted her, as she gradually spoke more and more. Eufrásia died in 2021. The Guató language is being revitalized, to proclaim its existence rather than with any real hope that it comes to be spoken once again.

Other “emergency” documentation projects are taking place, such as those with Djeoromitxi and Sakurabiat languages, in the Brazilian state of Rondônia, Western Amazonia.

These are just few example of the astonishing diversity of the Brazilian sociopolitical scenario that imposes new approaches to linguistic documentation, as well as to methodologies for vitalization/revitalization/reconstruction, drawing models to fit needs of communities where there are speakers (e.g, Wa’ikhana) and models to fit needs when there are no longer speakers (e.g., Guató).

## **2. What about the other side? A critical and self-critical reflection, from today's Brazil**

The urgency of documenting threatened languages, dramatically clamoured by Michael Krauss in 1992 (Krause, 1992), led to the emergence of a new market for projects and institutions throughout the world with undeniable consequences. Linguistic extractivism in the Global South feeds huge digital archives hosted in institutions in the Global North, which, in turn, sustain, smaller, albeit important, archives in the South. Brazilian linguists responded to the international call to a race for documentation – myself among them – seeking for resources that could make viable expensive fieldtrips. Once inside documentation programs, we testify heated discussions on the recognition of the rights of Indigenous communities to the access to the archives, and control over the access by others. The North wants openness, defending (its) science; the South reclaims selective access, or even no access, in the name of local interests and other (con)sciences.

Moreover, we cannot forget how much the documentation of native South American languages owes to the penetration and activity of North American proselytizing Evangelical Missions. It is enough to take note of the powerful institution known as the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), which left local offsprings in many Latin American countries, reproducing methods of documentation at the service of the conversion to

Christianity, under the principle “save languages, annihilate cultures”. The spreading of (alphabetical) writing and literacy among Indigenous communities in the South is a missionary legacy. Since the beginning of documentation, writing has dominated orality, despite the existence of voices frozen in recordings. Writing and schooling exile the traditional oral transmission of knowledges. The question is: are we free from the “missionary linguistics”? I believe I have done everything I could to distance myself from the Christian missionary heritage, but I am not sure I have succeeded.

The work of linguists dedicated to documenting original languages can be seen by outsider observers as a kind of salvationist mission, to register, document, annotate, transcribe, and translate, as many still existing languages as possible. For decades or centuries, we leave as legacies written monuments *post-mortem*, museums full of dead objects, for colonial posterity. In many cases, documents of these languages were what was left, alongside the corpses or the shattered lives of native peoples in their diasporas, dispersing to survive. It is necessary to recognize, on the other hand, that papers and recordings stored in publications and archives (physical and digital) have become, everywhere, precious sources from which languages, or fragments of them, emerge, capable of being reconstructed, especially once in the hands of Indigenous activists within the scope of projects and processes of “retomada” (recovery or reclaiming).

We, white academics, are witnessing, also in Brazil, to a growing protagonism of Indigenous academics, who, reached by precarious schooling before and after overcoming countless obstacles, managed to cross the walls of higher education institutions. Once inside the system – an achievement resulting from many struggles -, founded on unidirectional and benevolent inclusion, they moved on to targeted militancy for inoculating decolonial antibodies from inside. Who has not read or heard heavy and provocative words against the universalism and oppression of ‘Western’ sciences, including anthropology and linguistics, with their colonial and assimilationist ‘epistemes’. Other ‘epistemes’, proclaimed by resilient and insurgent colonized peoples, threaten dominant values and categories. Even though dialogue is not explicitly rejected, the critique of academic knowledge and spaces proclaims the presence of bodies and territories in the coexistence of humans and nonhumans. Indigenous female voices stand out for their strength and incisiveness.

These Indigenous voices deny the category of “extinct languages”; they oppose this label with that of “enchanted languages” which exist, and have always existed, even if silenced or hidden in shamanic dreams (Bomfim; Durazzo, 2023). How to describe

sociolinguistic realities where languages survive as “enchanted”? How to answer to the question on the number of speakers does a language have, when did it cease to be spoken, what is its degree of vitality? It seems that these questions are no longer relevant. What matters is the existence of a language, whether it be ‘ancestral’, ‘enchanted’, or a variety of the dominant language, in this case Portuguese. These voices claim the status of “Indigenous languages” for the local varieties of Portuguese spoken by Indigenous people. It is a provoking statement, that might be shocking to a linguist, but which is now definitively posed.

In this new context, academic linguists continue documenting “little-known or unknown” minoritized languages. They continue to believe in their “mission”, building archives and celebrating discoveries of structures, grammars, lexicons, verbal arts, even if they feel some kind of malaise - assumed, concealed or denied. They have evolved to adapt to new times and, thus, to survive. We, the linguists, now call ‘collaborators’ or ‘consultants’ those people we used to call ‘informants’; we co-author studies with Indigenous ‘colleagues’ and ‘partners’; we enact ‘collaborative’ projects and worry about the return of archives, recordings, orthographies, dictionaries, grammars, teaching tools to Indigenous communities we work with. Doing so, we hope that communities appreciate our efforts, but I find that, here in Brazil, this return is seen by Indigenous people as the very least of an immense debt stemming from decades of work for which, however useful they may have been, they were never truly subjects. Existing linguistic archives, digitalized or not, as those deposited in First World institutions, are distant objects, indecipherable or uninteresting. Some Indigenous activists reject documentation as the output of a neocolonial endeavour, and the inclusion of “Indigenous researchers” in documentation projects, or as co-authors of publications, do not eliminate mistrust.

Experiences of linguistic (re)vitalization or reclaiming are happening all over Brazil, as in other Latin American countries. In most cases, they are ongoing local political movements gaining visibility, autonomous and self-determined processes, for which the key words are “Indigenous protagonism” and “nothing for us without us”, the opening sentence of the *Declaración de los Pinos*.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Declaración de Los Pinos [Chapoltepek] - Construyendo un Decenio de Acciones para las Lenguas Indígenas: documento final del Evento de Alto Nivel titulado “Construyendo un Decenio de Acciones para las Lenguas Indígenas”, 27 y 28 de febrero de 2020, Ciudad de México (México). <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/>

Until few years ago, the Indigenous advocacy for original languages has been relatively unknown, but the Year of Indigenous Languages (2019) and the Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032), proclaimed by UN and UNESCO, has worked to make it visible, on a national and international scenario. The creation and consolidation of the Brazilian Working Group, within the scope of the Decade, came to further encourage indigenous participation in debates and events. The weakening of their languages, as well as the death or isolation of the last speakers have compelled teachers, leaderships, militants of all generations, with women's voices at the forefront, to make known their concerns. They denounced the public omission, "reclaiming" languages which were not "extinct", as had been declared by non-Indigenous linguists and anthropologists, but which still existed as "enchanted" (Bonfim; Durazzo, 2023). This linguistic activism is particularly ebullient in the northeast region of Brazil, where the first wave of colonization devastated populations with their languages and traditions. The enchanted languages are not spoken in the community's daily life, but they are alive in the memory of some speakers, in the descriptions of travelers and scholars, in the manifestations of spiritual beings in the dreams and songs of shamans. Bomfim and Durazzo emphasize that languages are enchanted not simply because, despite centuries of repression, they survive, in fragments, in ritual contexts, but because of an "ontology of language" based on the coexistence between human and more-than-human entities, in a communicative context not comprehensible to non-Indigenous consciousness.

Enchanted languages, valued as diacritics of collective and individual identity, are considered ancestral mother tongues, removing this status from Portuguese, finally, at most, just a first language. This difference between being a mother tongue and not being a first language forces us to think a language with other parameters.

Finally, the understanding of the inseparability of the fields of territory and language is crucial. After a lot of struggle, Indigenous peoples have been recognized, have been gaining small parts of their territories and now are strengthening processes of reclaiming/revitalizing their languages, with new strategies and along new paths. We had hoped that our work of documentation would have been welcomed by Indigenous mobilizations on linguistic (re)vitalization, but it is at best appropriated in a sort of linguistic counter-extractivism.

A pioneering example of the scenario I have just described is the trajectory and work of the Indigenous anthropologist Anari Braz Bomfim (2012, 2017, 2025). She has

written about the autonomous documentation of the “reclaiming” of Patxohã, which is what the Pataxó of the south of the coastal Brazilian state of Bahia call their lost ancestral language. It all started more than twenty years ago, far from the academy, when a group of young Pataxó students began an extensive and secret investigation, searching for information in historical archives and traveling through villages with recorders and notebooks. Bomfim states that:

This was not an idea imposed upon us, nor were we influenced by anthropologists or linguists, it was something that sprouted from the younger generation and the concern of leaders and elders with the strengthening of Pataxó culture. The group decided to carry out an independent study, not restricted to a single village, without the interference of external “specialists”, since we agreed to be the protagonists of this process, driven by the desire to discover, to carry out a more detailed study of the Pataxó language, constructing our way of doing the Pataxó way. We hoped that in ten or twenty years at most we could again become fluent in the language (Bomfim, 2017; p. 321).

The first language of the Pataxó is, today, a local variety of Brazilian Portuguese, which is also claimed as an Indigenous language, but the Pataxó, like so many peoples in similar situations, say that if they exist, their ancestral language always existed. After years of the reclamation process, new “tongue-cutters”<sup>5</sup> are arising — speaking a new ancestral language, which is written, and is present in schools, in the composition of songs, and in teaching tools. Patxohã did not resuscitate a past language, but is the result of a sort of creative and organized engineering of data coming from historical documents, the memories of elders, and the interchange with the Tikmu’un (Maxakali), who remain fluent speakers of a sister-language to ancient Pataxó.

The reconstruction of the Patxohã challenges the canons of the linguistic science: from writing to orality; from a vocabulary of two hundred words, which the young Pataxó researchers creatively increased to more than two thousand words, to a grammar. Years were spent experimenting with pronunciations of each word. A full language was born, or reborn, and the secret was out: Patxohã is now in scientific articles, on the web, in textbooks.

---

<sup>5</sup> “Tongue-cutters” (cortadores de língua) is an expression used in the past to identify those who could still speak with one another in the Pataxó language, or who could act as interpreters.

Bomfim remembers a woman: Zabelê, who passed away in October of 2024, a survivor of the 1951 massacre, by the military and local landowners. Zabelê spent his life fighting in defense of the Pataxó territory. As Bomfim says: “it is not possible to speak of the reclaiming of the language without speaking of the struggle for land” (Bomfim, 2017, p. 303). As we saw, similarly, much later, the documentation of Guató began with a claim to land and to the existence of a people.

These new experiences are common to other Indigenous people throughout the Northeast of Brazil. According to Indiane Kariri Xocó, her people have an internal and an external language: the first one is kept secret and performed just in rituals; the second one is the one that they are “reclaiming”.<sup>6</sup> The access to a catechism of the eighteenth century allowed the Tuxá to recover parts of the Dzubukuá language. The Kiriri recovered the Kipeá language from the materials left by Vincencio Mamiani, another missionary. Ancient Tupi is being learned, since 2000, by the Potiguara and the Tabajara (Paraíba). Not few Indigenous groups see the Nheengatu as the possibility of recovering an “ancestral” language; Nheengatu is an Indigenous colonial language, spoken, in its regional varieties, in many parts of Amazonia

### **3. Concluding remarks**

We mourn the undeniable and definitive loss of languages, annihilated over centuries of colonial oppression. Linguists, through decades of documentation efforts, have sought to safeguard the languages still spoken. It is also undeniable that documentation is an essential condition for successful revitalization, recovery, and reconstruction initiatives. We remain nonetheless convinced that our work of linguistic, ethnographical, historical and archaeological documentation has served, and still serves, to give existence and resilience to the peoples with whom we study and with whom we now “collaborate”.

Today, however, the classic work of non-Indigenous linguists is challenged by decolonial, even anticolonial, critiques from Indigenous activists. Linguists are challenged by a strong activism that aims to replace their colonial science with other epistememes, enchanted or spirit languages whose canonical description (grammar,

---

<sup>6</sup> Personal communication from Indiane Kariri Xocó to Anari Bomfim.

morphology, and syntax) is dispensable. The last Brazilian demographic census, held in 2022-23 by IBGE, will show the growing of the number of ethnicities and languages, a scenario that may shock linguists. Are dialogue and mutual understanding possible? I believe so, but it is not an easy conversation, considering the heavy colonial legacy that linguistics carries from centuries of history.

On the other hand, new languages and new forms of resilience are filling the Brazilian linguistic map. In a turn against the dominance of writing, orality retakes spaces and times in unexpected ways. The growing, and mostly excellent Indigenous audiovisual production brings back the voices of spoken languages. Despite canonical documentation, native languages revive in hundreds of videos realized by a generation of Indigenous filmmakers, documentaries shown in cinemas and on the internet, many of which have won national and international awards.

Finally, it is important to mention a movement that is very present in Indigenous activism and that also challenges linguists. It is about what I like to call “cannibalization” of the colonial Portuguese by local varieties, now claimed as Indigenous languages, that enrich the orality and writing of the dominant language, against the norm, the stigmatization of what is not correct, the protocols of academic performance. With the vanishing of the myth of the assimilation, endorsed by Brazilian military dictatorship in the 1970s and undone by the current Constitution, enacted in 1988, new ethnicities and new languages emerge, existentially and politically. Are we willing to deal with all of this?

### **Link para *Preprint* (obrigatório)**

Os manuscritos submetidos a *CadLin* devem ser previamente depositados em um [servidor de preprint](#) que suporte comentários públicos. O DOI do *preprint* para deve ser fornecido nesta seção.

### **Conflito de Interesse (obrigatório)**

A autora não tem conflitos de interesse a declarar.

### **Protocolo e Pré-Registro de Pesquisa (obrigatório)**

NA

### **Declaração de Disponibilidade de Dados (obrigatório)**

O compartilhamento de dados não é aplicável a este artigo, pois nenhum dado novo foi criado ou analisado neste estudo.

### **Fontes de financiamento (se aplicável)**

Pesquisa realizada com bolsa CNPq.

### **References**

BALYKOVA, Kristina; GODOY, Gustavo. “A perda e a retomada do Guató”. **Cadernos de Linguística**, v. 1, n. 3, p. 01-15, 2020

BOMFIM, Anari B. **Patxohã, língua de guerreiro: um estudo sobre o processo de retomada da língua pataxó**. Diss. Mestrado em Estudos Étnicos e Africanos, Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2012.

BOMFIM, Anari B. “Patxohã: a retomada da língua do povo Pataxó”. **Linguística**. Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Linguística da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. Volume13, n.1:303-327, 2017.

BOMFIM, Anari B. **Materializações da língua Pataxó no tempo presente: um estudo sobre o Patxohã do Extremo Sul da Bahia**. Tese de Doutorado, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Antropologia Social, Museu Nacional, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2025.

BOMFIM, Evandro de Souza; DURAZZO, Leandro. Retomadas linguísticas indígenas no Nordeste, Minas Gerais e Espírito Santo: um mapeamento etnográfico. (2023). Em **SciELO Preprints**, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1590/SciELOPreprints.6508>

FRANCHETTO, Bruna; RICE, Keren. Language Documentation in the Americas. **Language Documentation and Conservation**, v.8, p.251-261, 2014.

FRANCHETTO, Bruna; GODOY, Gustavo. Primeiros passos da revitalização da língua Guató: uma etnografia. **Revista Linguística** / Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Linguística da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Volume 13, n.1, jan de 2017, p. 281-302. ISSN 2238-975X 1.  
[<https://revistas.ufrj.br/index.php/rl>]

GALÚCIO, Ana Vilacy. As línguas indígenas e o fazer pesquisa na Amazônia: caminhos e reflexões. In: Cardoso, Jorcemara Matos and Maísa Ramos (eds.). **Vozes insurgentes:**

**diversidade brasileira em foco na linguística.** Campinas, SP: Editora da Abralin (in press).

GODOY, Gustavo; BALYKOVA, Kristina. 2022. Botando a lenha na fogueira do guató. **Living Languages/LíguasVivas** (1), p. 168-197, 2022.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7275/sg8p-v929>

KRAUSS, Michael. The World's Languages in Crisis. **Language** 68, p. 4-10, 1992.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.1992.0075>.

