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Language, exogamy and ethnicity in the Upper Rio Negro region

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Introduction

In this article we explore the relationship between language, exogamy and markers of shared and of distinct ethnicity in the Upper Rio Negro region (URN)[1] in Northwest Amazonia.[2] This region is well known for a high diversity of languages and language families (Arawakan, Eastern Tukanoan, Naduhup, Kakwa-Nukak, Kariban and Tupi-Guarani), as well as complex social and cultural relations that tend to create multilingual collectivities and individuals (Sorensen, 1967; Stenzel, 2005; Chernela, 2013; Chacon and Cayón, 2013; Epps, 2021). One particular feature shared by all groups in this region is patrilineal descent which minimally determines for an individual his/her social groups of kin and potential affines, as well as the language he/she should primarily speak and identify with. At the same time, when looked at comparatively, societies in the URN present considerable variations concerning language ideologies (with some reinforcing linguistic exogamy, while others, endogamy), post-marital residence patterns (virilocal vs. uxorilocal) and the size and complexity of social units (where clans are the minimal and most stable social unit beyond immediate kinship relations). Many works also identify a discrepancy between "ideal native models" and the "sociological reality", specifically between a model stressing hierarchy and patrilineality and a dynamic reality that emphasizes equality, affinity, and cognatic relations. Efforts to address these issues have ultimately revealed a number of possibilities, which seem to be related to a set of principles that generate multi-scale and fractal configurations, as addressed in Christine Hugh-Jones' (1979) pioneer work (among others, see Århem, 1981, 1989; Chernela, 1993, 2000; Gómez-Imbert, 1991, 1993; Vidal, 1999; Hill, 1996; Aikhenvald, 2002; Chacon and Cayón, 2013).

The main issue we would like to address in this article is how languages are used to help structure social relations in the URN. One particular way this takes place is through language boundaries, which are cultural projections that use languages as symbols to delineate identity and difference across social groups, as can be seen in statements such as "we speak the same language, therefore we are the same group" and "we are different people, therefore we speak different languages". Language boundaries are simultaneously prefabricated and imposed upon a society, but also socially constructed. The most objective language boundary is enforced through differences in language codes, which are highest between languages from distinct language families (e.g. Tukanoan vs. Arawakan vs. Naduhup). There are, however, other kinds of factors that create language boundaries at play, which are especially salient when social groups speak closely related languages and are in multilingual settings (which is the norm for the URN social configurations that we analyze below). Kroskrity (2010) talks about the importance of boundaries in processes of ethnogenesis and the maintenance of ethnic groups and how these boundaries are not objective givens but rather semiotically constructed. In these contexts, the status of lects[3] as different languages or as dialects of the same language

closely depends on the emic category of what count as the same "language" or as different "languages". Some societies tend to accentuate more inclusive language boundaries to emphasize sameness across social groups, while other societies uphold more exclusive language boundaries to emphasize difference.

As we explore this first issue, we will discuss fundamental principles of how language ideology and linguistic practices reflect and co-fabricate patterns of social organization and ethnicity. Although certain sociolinguistic situations—such as linguistic exogamy among most Eastern Tukanoan groups—have figured most prominently and even as a model with respect to other contexts within this broad region, there is in fact a wealth of diverse patterns that can shed light on key matters we would like to address in this article. We argue that these variations are related to the differences in contexts and scales, generated by the fluid and dynamic composition of language ideologies, language practices, and discourse forms, as well as the composition, fusion, and fission of social units of different magnitudes influenced by demographic densities and political visibility, among other characteristics. By exploring these different "alignments" of language, exogamy, and descent, we aim to provide a more holistic view about the role of languages as "variables" in these systems (C. Hugh-Jones, 1979), which will ultimately allow us to access the role of linguistic exogamy and endogamy in URN societies.

We will discuss five different major regional contexts and a few special cases within each context in order to explore key variations in the alignments of language, exogamy, and descent. The regional contexts and the main ethnolinguistic groups we will be discussing are summarized in Table 1 and in the map in Figure 1 (see Figure 2 for the distribution of ethnic groups):

REGIONAL CONTEXTS (AREAS)		ETHNIC GROUPS	LINGUISTIC FAMILIES
Interfluvial		Hup & Yuhup	Naduhup
Içana -Guainía		Baniwa-Koripako	Arawakan
Upper Vaupés		Kubeo	Eastern Tukanoan
Mirití-Apaporis		Yukuna, Tanimuka, Letuama, Yahuna	Eastern Tukanoan & Arawakan
Core Zone Hehe	Central Vaupés	Tariana, Desano, Wa'ikhana, Kotiria, Arapaso, Tukano	
	Pira-Cananarí	Kabiyarí, Makuna, Barasana, Tawaiano	
	Headwaters	Tatuyo, Siriano, Pisamira, Karapanã, Tuyuka, Yurutí, Bará	

table 1. Regional contexts (areas), ethnic groups and linguistic families in the URN.

In the next section we start with an overview of the URN and summarize our theoretical perspectives, presenting concepts for a tentative common vocabulary that will be useful for our comparative discussions. Then, we discuss a typology of alignments between language, exogamy, and ethnicity across the regional contexts in the URN. We do this as a heuristic strategy in order to build a holistic and multi-scalar view of the function and integration of these variables in different sociolinguistic systems. We will try to locate this discussion within a broader perspective regarding the role of languages as means to make sense of interethnic relations marked by difference and sameness, affinity, and descent.

3. Linguists commonly use the notion of lect as a blanket term when it is not possible or preferable to decide whether something is a distinct language or only a dialect of a language.

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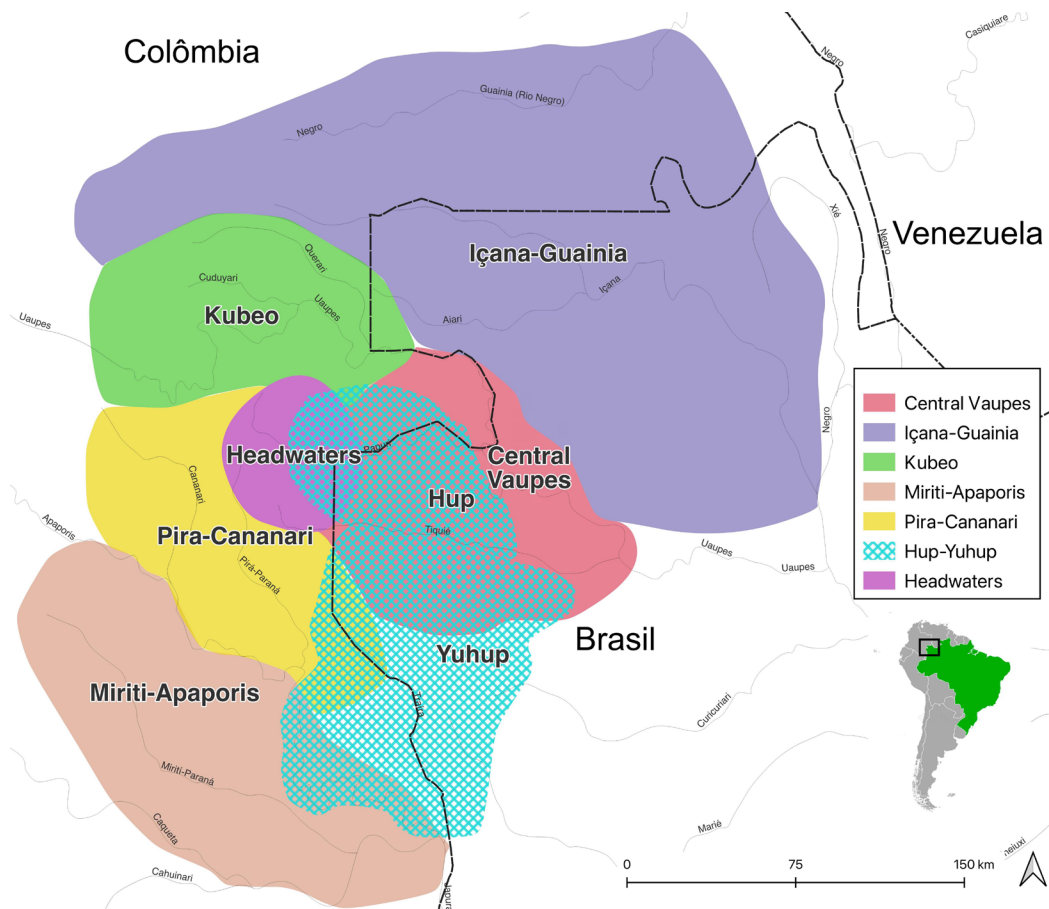**figure 1.** Regional Contexts (areas) of the Upper Rio Negro region (source: the authors).
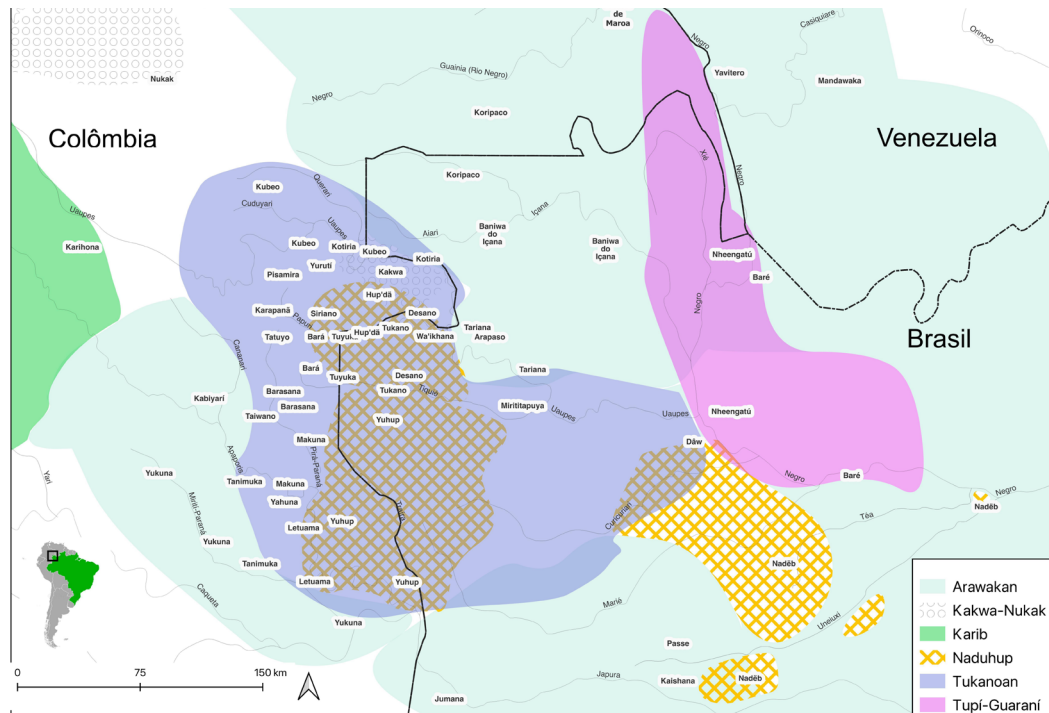

figure 2. Map of Languages and Language Families in the Upper Rio Negro regio.
(source: language locations were adapted from Hammarström et al., 2022).

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An overview of multilingual and interethnic relations in the Upper Rio Negro region

The URN occupies a central place within Northwest Amazonia, encompassing a vast area of high linguistic diversity and regional integration between distinct social groups. Given its geographical location, the URN lies at the confluence of different regions in South America, such as the Central Amazon, the Orinoco, the Llanos, Northern Andes, and Northwestern Amazonia. The indigenous peoples that live in this area speak languages from six language families. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the language families and Table 2 provides a summary of population sizes, number of languages and ethnic groups (as summarized by available sources). Table 2 should be regarded as a working definition of linguistic and ethnic units, as we are aware of the problems involved in defining and counting language and social units; an issue that we address more substantially in the remainder of this article.

LINGUISTIC FAMILY	POPULATION	LANGUAGES	ETHNIC GROUPS
Arawakan	44490	6	Baré, Warekena, Baniwa-Koripako, Tariana, Yukuna, Kabiyarí
Tukanoan	49720	16	Arapaso, Bará, Barasana, Desano, Karapanã, Kotiria, Kubeo, Makuna, Mirití-Tapuyo, Letuama, Pisamira, Taiwano, Tanimuka, Tatuyo, Tukano, Tuyuka, Siriano, Wa'ikhana, Yahuna, Yurutí
Kakwa-Nukak	891	2	Kakwa, Nukak
Naduhup	2504	4	Yuhup, Hupd'äh, Dâw, Nadëb
Kariban	525	1	Hianákoto, Umáua, Carijona, Guaque
Tupi-Guarani	10000	1	Baré, Baniwa, Warekena, Dâw
Total	89130	30	36

table 2. Population size, number of languages and ethnic groups in the Upper Rio Negro region (IBGE, 2010; ISA, 2021; DANE, 2018)

One of the most noticeable points about Table 2 is the demographic and linguistic dominance of Arawakan and Tukanoan populations compared to other language groups. Regarding the Tukanoan and Arawakan populations, there is a marked difference with respect to the number of languages and number of ethnic groups composing their total populations: the Tukanoan are characterized by a greater number of internal ethnolinguistic divisions than the Arawakan population.[4]

The Naduhup and Kakwa-Nukak form two small linguistic families whose speakers have been known by ethnographers and linguists as "Makú" or "Forest People". Together, they add up to six languages (see Epps and Bolaños, 2017). Kariban and Tupi-Guarani languages, although widespread in Lowland South America, each have only one representative in the URN region— Carijona and Nheengatu, respectively—and both are recent arrivals to the region. The Carijona speak a Kariban language with minimal internal dialectal differences (Robayo, 2000) and is closely related to Trio in the Guianas. Carijona appears to be a recent arrival to the Northwest Amazon, not long before or after the year 1500 (Franco, 2002). Although distinct social units have been recognized for speakers of Carijona in the historical literature, it is not clear how many of those still survive and even how many dialects or languages were actually spoken by this population.

Nheengatu came as a language of the Portuguese colonial enterprise towards the end of the 18th century with the establishment of a military outpost in today's São Gabriel da Cachoeira and the first Catholic missions. The bulk of current speakers of Nheengatu is composed of social groups that speak it either as an additional language or as their primary language after shifting from their more traditional Arawakan language, which is specifically the case of the Baré.

The Arawakan linguistic family is one of the most geographically widespread families in the Americas. Within the Northwest Amazon and along the URN region and Upper Orinoco waterways, at least 22 Arawakan languages have been documented historically, belonging to three different branches of the family: the Japura-Colombia branch with 15 languages (which was likely a dialectal continuum in a more remote past (Ramirez, 2020; Chacon, 2017)), the Upper Orinoco branch with 3 languages and the Middle Rio Negro branch with 4 languages (Ramirez, 2001). From these languages, only Baré (Middle Rio Negro branch), Baniva de Maroa (Upper Orinoco branch) and 6 Japurá-Colômbia languages (Yukuna, Baniwa-Koripako, Tariana, Kabiyarí, Piapoco and Achagua) are still spoken or have a few remaining speakers.

The Tukanoan linguistic family consists of about 29 languages documented historically, from which 21 are still spoken, with 16 of them in the URN. They are divided by a major split into two geographical and phylogenetic subgroups, known as Western and Eastern Tukanoan (henceforth, WT and ET) after Mason (1950). The high density of languages and ethnic groups is pervasive among ET groups, more precisely within the subgroup known as Nuclear Eastern Tukanoan, which encompasses languages spoken in the Pira-Paraná and Central Uaupes area (Chacon and List, 2016; Chacon and Michael, 2018). All Tukanoan languages are found within the Northwest Amazon, and it is likely that the major split in the family took place along the Caquetá river (Chacon, 2014; Cayón and Chacon, 2022).

Multilingual and interethnic relations in the URN are the result of socio-historical processes that existed for at least over two millennia within the broader context of the Northwest Amazon, while specific social formations based on the interrelations among Arawakan, Tukanoan, Naduhup and Kakwa-Nukak speaking groups seem to have existed at least before colonial times (Neves, 2000; Cayón and Chacon, 2022). Since Koch-Grünberg (2005 [1909]) and Nimuendajú (1950 [1927]) a commonly held view is that Eastern Tukanoan groups arrived more recently in the URN than the ancestors of Naduhup, Kakwa-Nukak and Arawakan speakers. The arriving ET groups split the Japura-Colombia Arawakan languages in half, dividing a probable dialectal continuum, and replacing Arawakan dominance over those areas (Wright, 1992). Although we have evidence that Tukanoan and Arawakan speakers have been in contact since the time of Proto-Tukanoan, the arrival in the URN region was marked by profound ethnogenetic processes among Tukanoan and Arawakan groups (Wright, 2005; Chacon, 2013a; Cayón and Chacon, 2014, 2022). Warfare, kidnapping of women followed by marriage alliances and ritual exchange (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1997), as well as fusion and fission of ethnic groups (Goldman, 1963) were important processes that resulted in substantial changes in subsistence, social structure, and cosmology of the ET societies.

Focal areas of Tukanoan-Arawakan contact have emerged, such as: Baniwa-Kotiria (Chernela, 1993; Stenzel and Gómez-Imbert, 2017); Baniwa-Kubeo (Wright, 2005; Gómez-Imbert, 1996; Chacon, 2013b); Tariana-Tukano (Neves, 2000; Aikhenvald, 2000; Andrello, 2012); Kabiyarí-Taiwano-Barasana (Correa, 1996; Gómez-Imbert, 1999); Yukuna-Tanimuka-Letuama (Rose et al., 2017) (see also Aikhenvald, 2002, and Chacon, 2017, for summaries of the linguistic picture). As a result, particular and hybrid cultural configurations developed in the URN where Tukanoan and Arawakan linguistic cultural traits have been exchanged (Wright, 1992) in an ancient and continuous process that has been understood as the Arawakization of Tukanoans and Tukanization of Arawakans. While, so far, the groups called "Makúan" have been seen mostly as leaning towards the Arawakan and the Tukanoan spheres. In fact, Epps

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(2017) shows linguistic evidence that while Hup and Yuhup have been mostly influenced by the Tukanoan sphere of interactions, Dâw and Nadëb have been more influenced by Arawakan languages of the Rio Negro (see also Cayón and Chacon, 2022, Epps and Obert *forthcoming*).

In the ethnological literature (Goldman, 1963; Bidou, 1976; C. Hugh-Jones, 1979; Reid, 1979; Århem, 1981; Hill, 1983; Jackson, 1983; Silverwood-Cope, 1990; Chernela, 1993; Athias, 1995; Journet, 1995; Correa, 1996; Pozzobon, 2000; Cabalzar, 2008), several singularities have been pointed out that make the URN stand out and contrast with other regions of the Amazon, both in the forms of social organization and in the complexity of the cosmologies. Social units are made up of exogamous patrilineal clans hierarchically related according to mythical birth order, which claim the possession of particular territories and/or ritual objects and roles. Arawakan and Tukanoan groups also share a virilocal post-marital residential pattern. Social exogamy among patrilines and groups from different villages create a strong bond of affinity between distinct social groups. All groups in the region are related by ritual cycles and exchanges of specialized products, and have shared cosmology and rituals, such as the sacred flutes and trumpets for male initiation (*yuruparí*) and the food-drink exchange rituals (*dabucurí*), as well as the mythical narratives that conceptually structure the territory, the history and organization of groups, and the life cycles of individuals and populations.

Despite the similarities among the groups of this area, there are relevant differences. With respect to certain socio-cosmological principles, most but not all Tukanoan speaking peoples report that they are descendants of an ancestral Anaconda or Anaconda-Canoe from which the ancestors of the clans that occupied the region emerged after a long journey that began downriver and in the East. Arawakan mythologies, on the other hand, mention journeys by demiurges whose starting and ending point is usually the Upper Rio Negro and cover a much broader space than that referenced by the paths of the ancestral Anacondas. The greatest contrast, however, takes place between how the Arawakan and Tukanoan peoples see themselves and characterize the speakers of the Naduhup and Kakwa-Nukak languages. It is commonly said that the former groups prefer to occupy riverine locations, in large malocas or villages, preferentially subsisting on fishing and agriculture, while the "forest groups" are characterized by living in the headwaters and interfluvial zones, traveling through different interfluves, and building temporary villages because they subsist primarily from hunting and seasonal gathering of wild fruits (FOIRN and ISA, 2005). Such stereotypes are also commonly reproduced by the way non-indigenous people see and talk about the communities called "Forest Groups". This, however, has been challenged in recent ethnographies about these social groups, which have highlighted the perspectives of the "Forest Groups" with respect to themselves (Lolli, 2010; Marques, 2015; Ramos, 2018).

Another important type of regional difference concerns language ideologies and the alignment of language as ethnic markers with different kinds of social structures. In preparation for the main points to be discussed in this article, it is important that we provide some background on more specific aspects of the URN social structure and their implications for sociolinguistic patterns.

Units and Principles of Social Organization in the URN region

Patrilineal descent and Dravidian kinship systems occur in all societies of the URN. Social relations converge in two broad categories: those who are considered kin and those who are considered affines, whether from the paternal or the maternal line. The kinship systems function as a model and are projected onto larger social scales, defining social units beyond immediate kin. The role of these units in the overall cultural and social exogamic system of the URN is complex, as well as their multifaceted expression by linguistic and other ethnic markers. In the following sections, we attempt a definition of the major social units in order to

have a standard vocabulary in the subsequent discussions about the alignments of language, exogamy and descent groups.

Phratric clusters

Social units demarcating patrilineal descent lines are manifested at different scales and by distinct linguistic and other ethnic markers. The smallest of these units is "the set of brothers". An intermediate level is that of the clans (or "sibs"), which mediates the co-residential and consanguineal social relations between a "set of brothers" and a more abstract scale of relations entailed by "phratries", which constitute the largest level. Phratries are generally formed by clusters of social units related by agnatic social units (i.e., by patrilineally related groups), but they may also be formed by units related by uterine (or matrilineal) relations as well.

A set of siblings descending from the same father is the minimum exogamous unit. Ideally this corresponds to a localized residential group, such as the residents of a maloca. Siblings are differentiated by order of birth, which is why their relationships are asymmetric and hierarchical (vertical), but at the same time they have symmetrical and egalitarian (horizontal) relationships, such as in different social specializations that allow complementary and articulated work in the economic and ritual functioning of the residential group (Cayón, 2020). They are agnatically related to other groups of the same type where the structural relationships of their parents' generation prevail, for which they will refer to each other as older or younger siblings. Together they can form a lineage or clan segment.

Clans are named social exogamous units that aggregate different sets of brothers as a single patrilineal descent group. In the URN societies where clans have a strong role, one also finds a common language (or sociolect) and a common territory shared by clan members, whether in current or mythical times. Clans act as a horizontal binding force between individuals not necessarily related by consanguinity, as well as a vertical vector of patrilineal descent and transmission of key ethnic markers. However, there are also weaker forms of clans, where ideologies related to language and territory are not crucial features. Clans belong to more complex networks and/or hierarchical structures, organized into more inclusive social units, forming agnatic and/or cognatic clusters. When forming such clusters, clans will inherit from higher units some of their defining linguistic, exogamic, and ethnic features. That is, while clans can be seen as a minimal and most cohesive idealized social unit beyond immediate kin, they are by no means autonomous to the extent that clans are related to other clans as agnatic, co-affines and affines.

A unit formed as a cluster of agnatically related clans is here understood as a **patrilineal phratry**. This term should cover what has been typically referred to as phratries for the Kubeo and Baniwa, as well "language group", "(simple or compound) exogamous group" (C. Hugh-Jones, 1979) and "tribe" (see Goldman, 1963; Sorensen, 1967) implied for Eastern Tukanoan groups (see Table 4 further below). A phratry is a model of a higher social unit based on agnatic relations among different patriclans. This model often projects an ideology of common descent and common language, especially among most Eastern Tukanoan groups, serving as a framework for social relations and for language ideologies. The role of a phratry is very flexible and hazy. Its basic function is to set the limits of the maximum exogamous unit, but also the hierarchical and recursive agnatic units at different scales (C. Hugh-Jones, 1979). Therefore, a phratry can be composed of a single clan or of several clans; it can have a flat or a nested and/or hierarchical organization of its clans; people from the same phratry can speak the same and only one language or patrilect, or they can be divided into multiple patrilects; it may or may not have a strong ideology of common patrilineal descent among its members. While clans within a phratry are related by consanguinity, the structure of phratries can be heterogeneous: some groups can be related by a strong ideology of common

patrilineal descent, such as having the same ancestor and mythical place of emergence, while others have weaker descent relations, such as having different ancestors or different places of emergence, etc. Such differences may reflect political tensions in the internal organization of the phratry, and often they arise due to historical processes of fusion of previously distinct patrilineal groups by extending a classificatory status of consanguinity to them.

Although the Dravidian system predicts that maternal parallel cousins are defined in terms of consanguinity, this category is ambiguous. In the URN, it is possible to refer to these relatives as "mother's son/daughter", and they are understood as matrilineal kin or **uterine siblings** or **co-affines** (Andrello, 2020). On a basic level, this notion can be grasped from a situation where a woman may have children with genitors from different patrilineal groups; although her children would be from two distinct patrilines, they are uterine siblings and cannot intermarry. At the level of social groups, two groups that are co-affines by virtue of marrying women from a third common group will be related as **uterine siblings.** Thus, in a broad sense, the patrilineal and matrilineal kin will form a **phratric cluster**. The unfolding of uterine siblings as a third category (in addition to affines and patrilineal kin) is important as a way to expand the system by creating a dimension of socialization that ultimately allows social groups to turn affines into kin and kin into affines (for more details see Århem, 1981; Cabalzar, 2008; Vianna, 2020; Andrello, 2020; Andrello and Vianna 2022). With time, this category may establish mythical consanguineal or affinal relationships with other groups. However, groups related as uterine siblings are not necessarily based on common ethno-linguistic features. In fact, they are actually the least cohesive, most unstable and most heterogeneous social units.

Alliance Clusters

Ethnographies commonly differentiate three kinds of affinal relations in the URN: preferential affines, common affines and potential affines. The difference between the first two is a matter of actual intermarriage alliances but can also contrast in that preferential affines often share common ethnic markers, such as shared mythical birthplaces and even a common language. The category of potential affines is complex and could refer to geographically distant peoples and enemies. According to Cabalzar (2000), reviewing ideas in Århem (1981) and S. Hugh-Jones (1993), the notion of descent is complementary to the notion of alliance. Alliance reinforces horizontal exchanges between non-agnatic groups, establishes relationships based on reciprocity, marriage, and other links of ritual and socioeconomic cooperation between different geographically close exogamous groups. Århem (1981) further argues that this system favors, in a broad sense, an endogamous logic, given the regularity across generations of spouse exchanges between cross-cousins belonging to different exogamous ethnic groups that share a wider territory.

Over time, affinal relations between different exogamous groups may evolve into what we call here **alliance clusters.** Alliance clusters typically involve two or more exogamous units, which form a set of preferential or most frequent allies. Most prominently, in an alliance cluster, the relations change direction: they move from a scale of exogamy and vertical relations within lineages, to another of endogamy and horizontal relations among allies. There is an important role of territoriality in defining an alliance cluster, which is generally based on local clusters of adjacent villages and exogamous lineages which tend to be highly endogamous and immediately contrasts with the strictly exogamous patrilineages distributed in individual malocas or villages (Århem, 1981; Cabalzar, 2000; Vianna, 2020). Some of the alliance clusters are conceived of as a large and encompassing named social category, such as *Pamɨri Masa* ('People of Transformation') or *Hino ria* ('Anaconda Children') in the Core Zone areas, or *The Descendants of the Anaconda* in the Mirití-Apaporis, *Wakuenai* ('People of Our Language') in the Içana-Guainía area and *Hib'áh Tẽhd'äh* ('Children of the Same Birth') among the Hupd'äh.

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These are social units bringing together affines and consanguineous groups, bounded by a common mythical origin and common territoriality.

Although usually depicted as egalitarian, the relationship among clans and phratries forming alliance clusters is often based on certain asymmetries where specific groups are demographically and politically dominant, which is reflected in more these groups concentrating more links in intermarriage networks, with their language often becoming more widespread. Figure 3 illustrates a snapshot of an alliance cluster from the Central Vaupés regional context, represented as an intermarriage network based on data gathered from the Brazilian side of the border by Azevedo (2003). We can see how some groups, in particular, dominate most nodes in the network, such as the Tukano, the Desano, followed by the Tuyuka. While highly interconnected, each exogamous group is also capable of maintaining alliances with social units outside the main alliance cluster, which ultimately opens up the cluster to a broader regional system, which can be seen in Figure 3 with the presence of groups that are more central to other regional contexts, such as the Makuna, Barasana, Hup, Bará, and Karapanã.
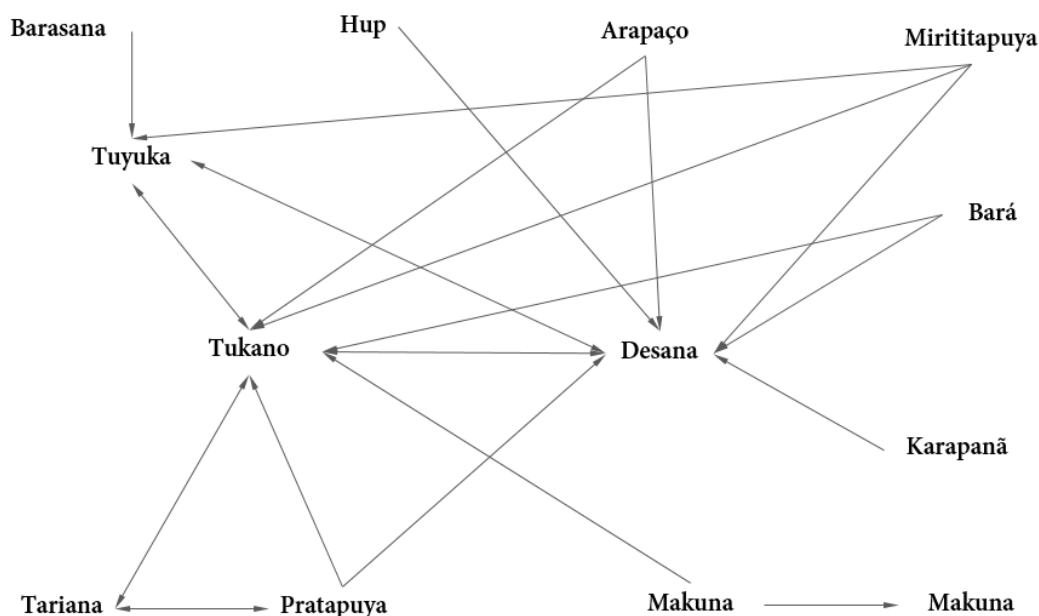
figure 3. Intermarriage Networks in the Brazilian Vaupés (redrawn from Azevedo 2003).

The place of languages and lects in the URN interpersonal relations

As summarized in Table 3 below, the organization of URN societies creates situations where an individual is minimally expected to learn at least three different lects during his/her lifespan. Janet Chernela introduces the terms "**patrilect** to refer to the language of one's patriclan, **matrilect** to refer to the language of one's mother's patriclan, and **alterlect** to refer to learned languages that are in neither category" (Chernela 2013: 200). These lects are sometimes dialects of the same language or completely different languages depending on the ethnic configuration of particular sub-areas, alliance clusters, and ideologies of linguistic endogamy and exogamy.

To capture the impact of geography in local language ecologies, in addition to these terms introduced by Chernela, we use the term **topolect** to refer to lects that are most dominant in a location (maloca, village or region) where a person grows up. In this sense, a topolect is tied to a perceived territory and to individuals that are actually linked to that territory. In patri/virilocal societies, the topolect is usually aligned with the patrilect, whereas the matrilect is foreign; in matri/uxorilocal societies, the topolect is usually aligned with the matrilect. When

both parents come from the same village, or where there is no clear post-marital residential pattern, the topolect will make no distinction between patrilect or matrilect.

As a specific kind of alterlect, we may also add the indigenous dominant languages Nheengatu, Tukano, Kubeo and Makuna, and the national languages Portuguese and Spanish, which we will generally refer to as **lingua franca**. A lingua franca is not necessarily acquired through kinship or co-residence as a typical alterlect, but chiefly through supra-local interpersonal relations. This sort of social relation reflects a tendency towards cosmopolitanism in URN societies, as vastly commented in the ethnological literature (e.g., Goldman, 1963) as well as social restructuring in post-colonial times (Epps, 2018). Table 3 summarizes the types of lects a person is commonly exposed to across the different kinds and scales of interpersonal relations.

LECTS	KINSHIP LEVEL	SOCIAL LEVEL
Topolect	Agnatic, Uterine or Cognatic siblings	Residential group or regional clusters
Patrilect	Agnatic siblings	Phratric clusters
Matrilect	Affines, Uterine Siblings	Alliance cluster, Residential group
Alterlect	Potential Affines, Uterine Siblings, Co-affines	Alliance cluster
Lingua Franca	Supra-local personal relations	Cosmopolitanism, Contact with societies outside the URN

table 3. Lects and interpersonal social relations in the Upper Rio Negro region.

Alignments of language, exogamy, and descent

Classical ethnographies of the region showed how the alignments of linguistic, exogamic and ethnic boundaries among Tukanoan groups were not homogenous among groups such as the Kubeo, Bara and Barasana (C. Hugh-Jones, 1979: 16). Rather than revealing different ethnographers' biases, the different concepts and their hierarchical relations reflect different ethnographic contexts, each responding to local forms of social organization and highlighting different roles of language (and other ethnic markers) in shaping social relations. We start by surveying the social units as analyzed in these earlier works in Table 4.

ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT	AGNATIC SIBLINGS		AGNATIC/ UTERINE SIBLINGS	ALLIANCE CLUSTERS	SOURCE
Içana-Guainía	Clan or Sib			*Wakuenai*	Hill 1983
Kubeo	Sib	Phratry		Tribe (Pamiwa)	Goldman 1963
Papuri	Sib	Tribe	Phratry	Anaconda children	Sorensen 1967
Papuri	Sib	Language Group			Jackson 1983
Pira-Paraná	Sib	Exogamous Group			C. Hugh-Jones 1979
Hup-Yuhup	Clan	Agnatic clans		Residential Group	Pozzobon 1997

table 4. Language boundaries (shaded cells) and social structures in the URN region.

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As we can see from Table 4, while in some ethnographic contexts language boundaries are aligned with units of what we call phratric clusters (agnatic and uterine siblings), in others a common language is shared by units of alliance clusters. Different configurations of alignments respond to specific and general processes that epitomize different uses of language and other ethnic markers as ways to substantiate and mediate the relationship between individuals and social units perceived as affines or agnatic kin.

In the following sections, we revisit the ethnographic contexts from Table 4 and expand their scope by a thorough comparison of interethnic relations across the regional contexts introduced in Table 1 and Figure 1. As we will see, each context is structured around three or more exogamous units, which form a network of intermarriage relations that creates complex phratric and alliance clusters, further sub-divided into distinct endogamous and exogamous junctions. Several linguistic and ethnolinguistic markers are fluidly negotiated across social groups within these contexts, confirming the vertical and horizontal bonds within clusters. Although we distinguish the contexts as relatively distinct ethnographic sub-areas, they are actually linked in a chain or network interconnecting one another to the entire URN regional system, and beyond. For instance, the Kotiria form an important link connecting the Central Uaupes area with the Kubeo and the Baniwa-Koripako areas; the Tuyuka have an important role in linking Central Vaupés with the Pira-Paraná area; the Makuna connects lower Pira-Paraná with lower Apaporis; the Tanimuka link the Apaporis with the Mirití-Paraná, and so on (see also Figure 3).

Interfluvial: Hup & Yuhup

Despite receiving the generic exonym "Makú" by Arawakans, Tukanoans, early ethnographers and local non-indigenous populations, Hup and Yuhup are two distinct self-designations with related meanings referring to "people" or "humanity", which are used to derive the names of their specific ethnic and language groups (e.g., *húp=d'ǝh* 'Hup people' and *húp=ʔĩh* 'Hup language') (Epps, 2008: 9; Lolli, 2016: 188). The difference between how "people" and "human" are named reflects the distinction of two different languages, Hup and Yuhup, and thus by extension, of two different "ethnic groups" speaking these different languages. "Makú", on the other hand, is a term that has no value from an emic perspective, since it does not define either a linguistic unit (a "Makú Linguistic Family" has not yet been successfully proven to exist (Epps and Bolaños, 2017)) nor a descent or alliance cluster (Lolli, 2016: 189).

Hup and Yuhup speaking societies are structured by a set of territorially dispersed alliance clusters, which are formed by different patrilineal clans that tend to live close together within a "regional group" (Mahecha, Franky & Cabrera, 1996; Pozzobon, 1997, 2000). In a regional group, there are usually three or more clans related by affinity. Regional groups and clans are named, but while regional groups are structured around affinity, clans are based on patrilineal descent (Marques and Ramos, 2019: 107). Given that kin and affines live in the same regional group, post-marital residence tends to be within the same regional group, although there are also common cases of uxorilocal marriages as well (Silverwood-Cope, 1990: 92-94). In any case, both residence patterns are markedly different from the stricter tendencies of virilocality of Tukanoans and Arawakans.

The exogamy system is deeply rooted in the clan as the most central exogamous unit. A person must marry outside the clan and outside an exogamous section or moiety, which serve as a maximum exogamous unit for this context. Differently from the clans and regional groups, exogamous sections are not named, although they are amply acknowledged by all and do not change from individual to individual. Creation myths also sustain a common descent ideology for each exogamous section by referring to the creation of the first human beings as two pairs of brothers and sisters, which are the ancestors of each set of clans (Pozzobon,

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1997). Although clans tend to be grouped in moieties or exogamous sections, these are weak units in practice, dependent on local forms of alliance, since it is possible for people from two clans supposedly from the same exogamous section to intermarry, depending on local circumstances (Pozzobon, 2000). Since there are often three or more clans within regional groups, marriage tends to be prohibited between two of the clans if both intermarry with a more dominant third clan. Marques and Ramos (2019: 124) mention that in the regional groups of the Japú river, the clan *Mòy Kä' Tẽh d'äh* ("Children of the deer-bone") marry with the clans *Dëh Puh Tẽh d'äh* ("Children of the Water-Foam") and *Dög Mẽh Tẽh d'äh* ("Children of the Uirapixuna Anaconda"), while the latter two do not marry each other, defining two types of relations between the clans: "brothers-in-law" and "kin".

Hup and Yuhup make use of linguistic markers to identify and index the distinct "regional groups" that divide both Yuhup and Hup languages into three dialects each (Pozzobon, 1997: 163). Normally, a residential group will speak the same topolect (or dialect) of Hup or Yuhup, and, as stated by Pozzobon (1997:163), the boundaries defining the limits of one's "family" are conflated with the boundaries of the dialect one speaks. Importantly, the geographical distance between regional groups is perceived as homologous to the ethnic and linguistic differences between people from distinct regional groups. As discussed regarding their ethnonyms, language is also paramount in defining Hup and Yuhup as related yet distinct ethnic identities in the regional context of the URN. This shows how language has a double role as an endocentric and an exocentric force, which, in the case of the Hup-Yuhup situation, means: (1) the creation of a common identity among intermarrying groups and (2) demarcating distinctions with other groups that gradually fall outside the closest spheres of social interactions. Notably, similar situations exist for the Baniwa-Koripako, Kubeo and the Yukuna, as we will see.

Pozzobon (1997: 165-6) claims that the most ancient Hup and Yuhup clans are often found across two distinct regional groups and span across different topolect boundaries, whether a dialect boundary (e.g., some clans span across different regional groups of primarily Hup speakers) or an ethno-linguistic boundary (e.g., there are clans that encompasses both Hup and Yuhup speaking people). This seems to be a conjectural situation, according to Pozzobon, which emerged due to the separation of Hup and Yuhup populations that once lived in a relatively continuous territory before the arrival of Eastern Tukanoan groups. Marques and Ramos (2019: 124) explain that the clans from the Japú regional group used to speak their own *ɨd* ("language"). Currently, however, they all rely only on the *ɨd* of the dominant clan *Mòy Kä' Tẽh d'äh*, and, according to the Hup, this universalization of the "form of speech" of one of the clans is a relatively recent phenomenon[5]. Thus, while languages in the form of topolects are sensitive to the construction of ethnic identity and affinal relations within a regional group, neither the patrilineal clans nor the larger exogamous sets are coterminous with linguistic boundaries.

Içana-Guainía: Baniwa-Koripako

The Baniwa and Koripako form a large population within the Içana and Upper Negro/Guainía area. They speak an Arawakan language that is divided in three to five major dialects (Hill, 1983; Ramirez, 2001; Chacon et al., 2019). There are about 30 patrilineal clans, grouped into three phratries. Each phratry has its own ancestor and its own traditional territory. All phratries claim their descent from the hands of the creator *Iñapirikuli* at the rapids of Hiipana on the Aiarí river (Gonçalves, 2018). Hill (1983: 38) and Gonçalves (2018) show that phratry names are identical to the names of the highest-ranking clans. While clans are named, hierarchically organized and share a set of cohesive and distinctive ethnic markers, phratries function as a looser ethnic and exogamic unit (Vianna, 2020).

Despite a strong ideology of common descent and a common language, there is historically no well-established name for the Baniwa and Koripako as a whole. As Vianna (2020: 12) explains, although "Baniwa" is an important exonym used in interethnic relations, the clan more importantly expresses self-denomination among themselves. Recent proposals for a common autonym among Baniwa and Koripako have emphasized the centrality of language. This is the case of *Wákuenai* ("People of Our Language") (Hill, 1983) and *Medzeniakonai* ("People of the Original Language"). As the Baniwa-Koripako phratries consider shared language to be an important marker of their common ethnic identity, they tend to minimize their dialectal differences and emphasize mutual intelligibility within the perceived ethnolinguistic groups (Hill, 1996: 144), which includes both affines and kin.

The division of Baniwa-Koripako language into major dialects currently cuts across the distribution of the more dispersed clans and phratries, although it is not unlikely that language boundaries could have been more aligned to traditional territories of the phratries in the past (Gonçalves, 2018; Chacon et al., 2019). Dialectal boundaries have been emically identified by shibboleths, which, for instance, take into consideration the way certain locations express the word for "no", such as *karo* [kaʐʊ] in the *karutana* sociolect of lower Içana or *kori* [kʊʐi] in the *koripako* sociolect of the Guainía River in Colombia (see Gonçalves, 2018, and Granadillo, 2006 for more shibboleths of these kinds).

The use of a common language by all intermarrying phratries in the Baniwa-Koripako context, as well as the formation of topolects across different clans and phratries in specific sections of this large territory find an explanation in the territorial organization of alliance clusters. According to Vianna (2020: 13-15), large sections of the Baniwa-Koripako territory can be understood as constituted by an "endogamous junction", such as the Aiarí river, within which nest smaller "exogamous junctions" that are territorial units comprising a few villages controlled by particular clans belonging to the same phratric cluster, whether by agnatic or uterine relations. Thus, in a recursive organization, Baniwa-Koripako language constitutes a linguistic boundary that demarcates and unify the Baniwa-Koripako ethnographic context as a whole, while in the same way but at a different scale, smaller topolect boundaries demarcates smaller units of alliance clusters (or endogamous junctions). As a result, we see that language in the Baniwa-Koripako context is recursively aligned with alliance clusters, conflating linguistic and ethnic identities, and encompassing all exogamous units within a continuous territory. This is similar to the Hup and Yuhup context in a certain way. They differ in the way that a common language and a common descent ideology is found across all alliance *and* phratric clusters in the Baniwa-Koripako context, while among Hup and Yuhup contexts language is more saliently distinguished at the dialectal level of the regional group, which defines alliance clusters but fails to encompass phratric clusters more generally.

Upper Vaupés: Kubeo

The Kubeo speaking people form a large population in the Upper Vaupés, Querarí, Cuduyarí and Upper Aiarí rivers. They speak an Eastern Tukanoan language and are better seen as a heterogeneous collectivity of different social units whose use of a common language "defines them as an ethnic identity" (Goldman, 2004: 57). Although they are speakers of a single language (divided into three dialects according to Morse et al., 2000), there is no common ethnonym for the entire group. The term *Pamiwa* is largely polysemous. It can be used to refer to indigenous peoples in general or to the peoples that primarily speak the Kubeo language. From a more emic perspective, it is used to oppose the "true" *Pamiwa* from other groups that had spoken Kubeo during mythical or bygone times. The term "Kubeo" is an exonym that encompasses all Kubeo speaking populations, likely derived from *kɨ-be-wɨ* meaning 'there is not'—a phrase that the Kubeo may have often repeated to the violent Luso-Brazilian traders (Koch-Grünberg, 2005 [1909]; Chacon, 2013b).

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Besides the lack of a common self-designation, the Kubeo are composed of five phratric clusters and from three to four distinct descent groups (see Goldman, 2004; Chacon, 2013b; UDIC, n.d). The first phratric cluster is composed of the *Hehenawa* (phratry 1) clans and other agnatic clans. Although they form a single descent group having *Kúwai* and the godmother *Yɨredo* as their creators, there is no single mythical ancestor for all of them. A restricted group of seven clans (the "authentic" *Hehenawa*) emerged at *īpārārī* or Santa Cruz de Waracapurí rapids. Some 10 other clans failed to emerge in the same place, becoming "separated from the main body" and completed their emergence further upriver (Goldman, 2004: 65). The Desano are included as distant kinsmen in this phratry, and the *Hehenawa* claim they used to speak the same language in the past, having separated from each other at the *Ipanoré* rapids, further downriver from Santa Cruz (Goldman, 2004: 58-9).

The second phratric cluster consists of the *Hehenawa* preferential allies (phratry 2). According to Goldman's *Hehenawa* interlocutors and the fragmentary information in UDIC (n.d.), it seems that this phratric cluster is composed of two descent groups with distinct places of emergence and mythical ancestors: one is the *Hɨrɨwa* and *Miaðawa*, and the other is the *Biowa* and *Korowa* (traditional owners of the Querarí river). According to Goldman (2004: 65-67), each descent group used to speak a different language—likely an Arawakan language—before shifting to Kubeo. This phratric cluster also includes the *Kotiria* (or Wanano) as uterine siblings, since they also intermarry with the *Hehenawa* phratry.

The third phratric cluster is composed of the *Yuremawa*, *Tarabɨawɨ*, and other agnatic clans, such as the *Yokakɨbewɨ* and the *Yainiwa*, among others (phratry 3). They live in the Querarí, Upper Ayarí and in the Vaupés rivers. They are agnatically related to the *Hohoodene* phratry of the Baniwa-Koripako and have their mythical place of origin at *Hipana* or Uapuí rapids in the Aiarí. According to our *Yuremawa* interlocutors and available evidence, groups from this phratry used to speak a dialect of the Baniwa-Koripako language. Traditionally, they intermarry with the phratry that includes the *Kotiria* and the *Biowa*, but they do not traditionally intermarry with the *Hehenawa* groups and the Desano (see Pedroso, 2019 for variations in the structure of this phratry according to different interlocutors).

The *Yúriwawa* clan has a unique position in the Kubeo complex (phratry 4). On the one hand, their preferential allies are groups from the third phratry, particularly the *Yuremawa*. They can also intermarry with the *Hehenawa* clans from the first phratry, but not with the *Biowa*, *Kotiria* or other groups from the second phratric cluster. On the other hand, they form a very close history of common descent with the *Yuremawa*. Both groups refer to themselves as *Yúri Pārāmena* ("grandchildren of Yúri"), their creator being is *Yúri* (or *Dzooli* in Baniwa-Koripako language), they spoke a common Arawakan ancestral language in the past, and they share the same mythical places of origin—which, in addition to Uapuí, includes the rapids of *Wakaipani* in the Açaí tributary of the Vaupés. So, from a descent point of view, the *Yúriwawa* are related to the third phratry, but from an exogamic point of view, they form a phratric cluster as uterine siblings with the *Biowa, Hɨrɨwa, Kotiria* and other groups from the second phratry.

The Kubeo complex also includes the *Betowa* (phratry 5). According to our interlocutors, the *Betowa* have different clans, most of them living along the Vaupés River above the mouth of the Cuduyarí and one clan living below the mouth of the Querarí River, along with the *Yuremawa* and *Yúriwawa* communities. Their descent history is disputed, with some saying that they belong to the same descent group as the *Yuremawa* as the lowest ranking clan, while others say that they have a different place of origin and were assimilated into the *Yuremawa* descent line. It is not clear with whom they can traditionally intermarry, but our records show that intermarriage is possible with groups belonging to all Kubeo phratric clusters listed above.

Kubeo history suggests that the *Hehenawa* (phratry 1) are the original Tukanoan speaking group and that the other phratries shifted to Kubeo as they become allies. According to Gold-

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man (2004: 61-64) the *Hehenawa* initially consisted of a moiety system, where intermarriage would take place across two exogamous sets of clans speaking the same original language, having the same descent history, and acting as a cohesive ethnic group. This is similar to what we have seen above concerning the relationship of the *Yuremawa* and *Yúriwawa*, and Hup and Yuhup. It is not clear how the *Hehenawa* moiety system evolved into the current situation, with some Kubeo analysts claiming that one original half of the moiety drifted away, settling among other groups of the Pirá-Paraná, and others argue that this system was of another era, "and that this mode of moiety was prototypic rather than actual or primordial" (Goldman, 2004: 62). In the creation of the Kubeo alliance cluster, Goldman (2004) highlights two main kinds of processes. First, the incorporation of smaller groups as newcomers into one of the existing phratries, such as the *Biowa* and *Hɨrɨwa*, who would have adhered to and later replaced the second phratry in the moiety system. Then, the same process would be repeated with the addition of the *Yuremawa*, *Yúriwawa*, *Betowa* and other latecomers to the Kubeo context, although now the networks would have expanded from two to three and four phratric clusters. In fact, there are clearer ethnic bonds between phratries 1-2 vs. phratries 3-5 (e.g., *Kúwai* vs. *Yúri* as creators), which relates to two different moments in Kubeo ethnogenesis.

Whatever is the case concerning the original moiety system, the Kubeo process suggests that, from the start or from an idealized perspective, common language and common descent ideology would be the norm across two distinct exogamous groups. Although they have different descent histories from the *Hehenawa*, the fact that all other Kubeo phratries started to speak the same language shows that the Kubeo language alliance cluster iteratively used language as a way to create horizontal ethnic ties between allies. In addition, not only did the incoming groups start to speak Kubeo, but they also substantially influenced the vocabulary and grammar (see Gómez-Imbert, 1996; Chacon, 2013b). While the use of a common language between allies is ultimately quite similar to the Baniwa-Koripako and Hup and Yuhup alliance clusters, the Kubeo alliance cluster is more heterogeneous since each Kubeo phratry has distinct descent histories. On the other hand, phratric boundaries among the Kubeo cut across language boundaries to the extent that distant agnatic kins such as the Desano and Hohoodene or uterine siblings such as the Kotiria are also included within phratric clusters. This is not typically the case among the Baniwa-Koripako. Rather, it is more similar to the Hup and Yuhup situation, where certain phratric boundaries, whether of the clan or of the larger exogamous set, can encompass speakers of both Hup and Yuhup. Ultimately, this reinforces the role of language in the Kubeo social configuration as an effective means to define the dimension of affinity.

The Mirití-Apaporis

The major groups from this area form two broad ethnolinguistic assemblages: a Yukuna (Arawakan) speaking assemblage within the Mirití-Paraná and a Tanimuka-Letuama (Tukanoan) speaking one in the Apaporis. Intermarriage occurs both within and across these ethno-linguistic assemblages in a total of about nine exogamous units. Despite this general pattern of territorial distribution, the rubber boom period caused an influx of individuals and groups fleeing the Caquetá and lower Apaporis into Yukuna territory, especially the Tanimuka and Letuama, which resulted in a rearrangement of interethnic relations (van der Hammen, 1991: 30).

Among the Yukuna speaking groups, there are five major exogamous units, which intermarry among their fellow Yukuna speaking groups as well as with other neighboring groups that do not speak Yukuna. The *Kameheya* consider themselves the "True Yukuna" who were the traditional speakers of the Yukuna language and belong to the highest ranked clans. Three other exogamous groups were "adopted" by the Yukuna and belong obliquely to the Yukuna

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descent line, while still preserving their own names: *Herúriwa*, *Himíkepi* and *Hurumi*. The fifth exogamous group, the Matapí (*Upichiya*), has its own descent line, not shared with the *Kameheya* and lower Yukuna clans, which sets them aside in the hierarchy that organizes the other Yukuna speaking groups (Schackt, 1990: 203). While the *Kameheya* are the traditional inhabitants of the Mirití-Paraná, the other groups moved to this river due to interethnic conflicts during colonial times. They would have shifted their language to Yukuna only after that period (Franky, 2006: 210). According to van der Hammen (1991: 16-24) this might have taken place in the mid-19th century, since the Yukuna recall this event from about five generations ago (counting from the 1980s).

The Tukanoan speaking zone is composed of four exogamous groups: the Tanimuka, Letuama (Retuarã), as well as the Yahuna and *Yawijeje* (Franky, 2006). They all speak very close patrilects. The Letuama and Tanimuka are preferential in-laws and belong to two distinct descent groups. The Letuama belong to the same descent group as the Makuna speaking *Ide Masa* from the Pirá-Paraná, with whom they do not intermarry. The Tanimuka, on the other hand, can intermarry with the *Ide Masa*. Although forming a single descent group, Tanimuka clans functioned as two distinct exogamous units in the past. According to Hildebrand (1979), the Tanimuka were traditionally divided into two moieties, the clan of the "Elders" and the "Juniors", following the order of birth of two primordial Tanimuka men. There were animosities between these groups in the past, and the entire group almost went extinct, until they recreated the two lineages by having Letuama women as spouses. Their descendants shifted from their original patrilect to the language of their mothers, that is, Letuama. According to Franky (2006), it is possible that the Tanimuka used to speak an Arawakan language in the past (see Arias et al., 2022).

Traversing the Arawakan-Tukanoan division of the area, the Letuama and the Tanimuka share very similar cultural traits with the Yukuna, and some also speak the Yukuna language (Hildreband, 1979; van der Hammen, 1991). In addition, all groups are related through two major alliance clusters with different shades of common descent ideologies: the "Descendants of the Anaconda" which include the Letuama, the Makuna *Ide Masa*, and the Matapí, all sharing the typical Tukanoan mythical origin from an ancestral anaconda; and the "Descendants of the Jaguar" which include the Yukuna, the Tanimuka, the Yahuna, the Makuna speaking *Emoa*, and the Yuhup. According to the Tanimuka, the Matapí used to speak a language similar to Letuama before shifting to Yukuna, while some *Ide Masa* say that both Letuama and the Matapí are their younger siblings (Franky, 2006: 208). This suggests that the Descendants of the Anaconda (*Ide Masa*, Letuama and Matapí) all spoke a Tukanoan language, while the descendants of the Jaguar have a more multilingual and multiethnic configuration, similar to the way Arawakan-speaking groups created multiethnic and multilingual regional systems in South America and the Caribbean (see, for instance, Hornborg and Hill, 2011).

Comparatively, there are several structural and diachronic similarities between the sociolinguistic configuration of this area and the others we have seen so far. For instance, among the Yukuna and the Kubeo speaking groups, clans from different descent and exogamous groups came to speak the same language within an alliance cluster, although the outcome among the Yukuna is the persistence of an Arawakan language, and among the Kubeo, it is a Tukanoan language. On the other hand, the Tanimuka initial moiety system bears similarities to both the Hup and Yuhup scenario and the Hehenawa ancient moiety system. The development in the Mirití-Paraná of two broad assemblages of alliance clusters and descent groups (Anaconda and Jaguar) and of two ethnolinguistic identities (Tukanoan and Arawakan) are suggestive of how Tukanoan speaking groups use language to emphasize common descent in a phratric cluster and how the Arawakan speaking groups use language to emphasize horizontal relations in an alliance cluster.

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The Core Zone

The Core Zone concentrates the most diverse and complex alignments of language, exogamy and descent ideologies.[6] It is the place where linguistic exogamy has developed more fully as an ideological construct and operational dimension shaping language practices. It is also the area where an ideology of descent from an anaconda traveling upriver is most commonly found, coupled with a general trend to classify exogamous groups and their ancestral anacondas into their "cosmic habitats" of "land", "air" and "water" (C. Hugh-Jones, 1979: 36-37).

Two Arawakan languages are spoken in this zone, Kabiyarí in the West, and Tariana in the East. Between these two groups, there are several languages forming a single subgroup of Eastern Tukanoan languages, called Nuclear Eastern Tukanoan (which basically excludes Tanimuka, Letuama, Yahuna and Kubeo; Chacon and List, 2016). The entire region is interconnected by networks of intermarriage relations and descent groups, overlapping with groups in other areas. For instance: the Tariana form a phratry with the Hohoodene in the Aiarí and intermarry with the Tukano and Wa'ikhana in the Papurí and Vaupés; and the Wa'ikhana form a phratry with the Kotiria who in turn intermarry with the Kubeo. Given the complex chains and networks of descent and intermarriage relations, it is difficult to draw a line dividing the entire Core Zone. With some caution, however, we can propose a distinction between the Pirá-Cananarí area (where Makuna, Barasano, Taiwano and Kabiyarí are more central groups geographically) and the Central Vaupés (where the more central groups are Tariana, Tukano, Desano, Wa'ikhana, Kotiria and Arapaso). Between them we find many groups occupying the headwaters of the Papuri, Tiquié, Pirá-Paraná and smaller tributaries of the Upper Vaupés, such as the Tatuyo, Karapanã, Yurutí, Siriano, Bará, Tuyuka and Pisamira.

The distinction between Pirá-Cananarí, Central Vaupés and Headwaters is partially motivated by linguistic and descent criteria. From the point of view of descent, all groups in the Central Vaupés have the rapids of Ipanoré as their common site of emergence, while in the Pirá-Cananarí some groups, such as the Makuna speaking phratry of the *Ide Masa* and their agnatic kin Letuama have their site of emergence in *Yuisi* in the Apaporis, whereas some Headwaters groups have their site of emergence in the *Juruparí* rapids in Upper Vaupés.

From the point of view of linguistics, these three sub-regions seem to correspond to areas initially dominated by languages from two major branches within the Nuclear Eastern Tukanoan subgroup: in the Pirá-Cananarí, the Barasano and Makuna and the now extinct Yupua language form a cohesive branch, that also includes Desano and Siriano (currently outside this area; Chacon, 2014). Likewise, Tukano, Kotiria, Wa'ikhana, the now extinct languages Arapaso and Kowewana, as well as Bará, Karapanã, Tatuyo, Tuyuka, Yurutí, Pisamira, would form another branch, where the largest groups would be closer to the Vaupés and the smaller groups in the Headwaters. Indeed, some Headwaters languages are quite closely related, namely Karapanã, Tuyuka, Yurutí and Pisamira. According to this perspective, it would be possible that the Desano and Siriano moved from the Pirá-Cananarí area to the Headwaters and Central Vaupés areas. On the other hand, many groups that nowadays live on the Pirá-Paraná had their site of emergence in Ipanoré, such as the Karapanã and Taiwano, which suggests movements from the Central Vaupés to the Pirá-Cananarí and Headwaters areas as well.

In the Pirá-Cananarí area, we basically find three languages spoken: Kabiyarí, Makuna and Barasano. The Kabiyarí are largely located in the Cananarí river and mostly intermarry with the Barasana and Taiwano, their closest neighbors. Their agnatic kin are all Tukanoan speaking groups—Yurutí, Bará and Tukano—who are located in distant locations. The Kabiyarí are actually closer in linguistic and geographical terms to their uterine siblings—the Arawakan speaking Yukuna from the Mirití-Apaporis area (Correa, 1996). However, their descent histories do not reveal any particular common origin with Arawakan speaking groups,

and their site of emergence at the *Jirijirimo* rapids (Apapóris) (Correa, 1989: 29) is not shared with its agnatic kin Yurutí, Bará and Tukano.

The Makuna and Barasana languages form a dialect continuum across several exogamic and descent groups in the Pirá-Paraná and Apapóris river. Makuna is spoken by five named groups, *Ide Masa, Yiba Masa, Emoa, Heañara, Ɨmia Masa*. These groups are related as four sets of descent groups: the *Ide Masa* and *Emoa* are descendants of the Water Anaconda, *Yiba Masa* from the Earth Anaconda, *Heañara* from the Metal Anaconda, *Ɨmia Masa* from Sky Anaconda.[7] These four sets of descent groups correspond to four exogamous groups: the *Ide Masa* and *Emoa* are affines, but are related by common descent; the *Yiba Masa* and *Heañarã* are agnatic kin and intermarry with the Ide Masa (Cayón, 2013: 151-156). At the same time, the *Ide Masa* are agnatic kin to the Letuama, who speak a markedly different Tukanoan language, while the *Yiba Masa* form a phratric cluster ("compound exogamous group") with other Barasana patrilines (C. Hugh-Jones, 1979: 283). On the other hand, the Barasana language is spoken by all Barasana lineages (except for the *Yiba Masa*) plus the Taiwano (Eduria), although with marked differences in the prosody and the lexicon (Jones and Jones, 2013). On their side, the Taiwano are related as agnatic kin to the Karapanã, with whom they share the same ancestor (*ɨko hino*, "medicine anaconda") and form a patrilineal descent group (Correa, 1996).

All of the groups in the Central Vaupés and the Headwaters areas function as a named intermediate phratric level, which contains an assemblage of patrilineally related clans and is perceived as a distinct ethnolinguistic unit. The named agnatic phratric units—known as exogamous groups (C. Hugh-Jones, 1979) or language groups (Jackson, 1983)—are not, however, the highest patrilineal cluster, since some of these phratric units are bound by common patrilineal descent to others, such as *Kotiria* and *Wa'ikhana*, Tukano and Bará, Karapanã, Taiwano and Tuyuka. Also, neither are they the maximum exogamic unit, since intermarriage is prohibited with several groups to which they are related as uterine siblings or co-affines. A different social structure might have left vestiges of what Sorensen (1967) has referred to as moieties among the *Wa'ikhana* (see also Jackson, 1983: 173). Thus, it is also possible that the situation among some groups previously involved a system of moieties as suggested for the Kubeo, the Tanimuka, Hup and Yuhup.

In the Central Vaupés, a tendency has been observed since Koch-Grünberg (2005 [1909]) where the Tukano language is replacing that of other exogamous groups, such as *Wa'ikhana*, Desana, Tariana, Mirití-Tapuya, Arapaso and Kowewana. Although this can be linked to more recent transformations in the sociolinguistic situation of the Vaupés (Aikhenvald, 2002; Epps, 2018), it is certainly not exceptional if we consider all the other contexts discussed above in which a common language is a diacritic of an alliance cluster. In the Headwaters area, ethnolinguistic boundaries would seem more well-preserved concerning circumstances of language shift. However, the groups from that area (i.e., Tatuyo, Karapanã, Bará, Tuyuka, Yurutí and Pisamira) form a set of very closely related Tukanoan languages that consider their languages sufficiently distinct. The Tatuyo and Karapanã, on the one hand, and Tuyuka and Bará, on the other hand, are preferential in-laws. Conversely, the Karapanã and Tuyuka are agnatic kin, and the same situation holds for the Bará and Yurutí (C. Hugh-Jones, 1979: 284-5). Tatuyo, Pisamira and Siriano are uterine siblings (Gómez-Imbert, 1991: 549).

In any case, the historical configuration of the Central Vaupés and the Headwaters area is for languages to be regarded as a marker of clans and intermediate levels of phratric clusters. Language, thus, is nested within an ideology of descent and a delimitation of exogamous units, albeit the latter are larger than the language group.

Concurrently, in the entire Core Zone, language boundaries are aligned with a patrilineal descent ideology where further sociolectal boundaries are nested into a perceived common

7. This interpretation is based on Cayón's (2013) work, which corresponds to the views of *Ide Masa* consultants in the *Toaka* and Apaporis rivers. Following the interpretation of the *Ide Masa* from the *Komeña* river, according to Århem (1981), the *Emoa* and *Heañarã* descend from the same anaconda.

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language, whose minor differences—largely in terms of lexicon and phonetics—index smaller social units, such as a clan. For instance, while the Bará see all group members as speakers of the same language, Jackson comments that

> Speech differences [...] also are seen to correlate with sib boundaries (although not nearly so extensively as those that ought to separate exogamous units); minute differences in speech behavior, therefore, are certainly markers and perhaps can be seen as intangible property belonging to a sib (Jackson, 1983: 76).

According to Jackson, higher-ranking Bará clans mark the ethnolinguistic differences between them and the lower-ranking *Wamɨtañará* clan in several ways, including different status in the Anaconda journey, as well as with distinct linguistic traits:

> The *Wamɨtañará* sib is spoken of as boarding the canoe at Yapú Rapids on the upper Papurí, rather than farther downstream [...] [which] hints that this sib is seen as rather distant from other, higher ranking Bará sibs [...] Linguistic cues can also signal low rank, at least according to members of high-ranked sibs. Members of the *Wamɨtañará* sib were described by other Bará as speaking ungrammatically and with incorrect pronunciation (Jackson, 1983: 74)

Similar facts can be reported about the Tatuyo, which are composed of five to six clans and do not recognize other groups as their agnatic kin. While all clans have Ananas rapids as their unique birthplace, they belong to different descent groups, having two mythical ancestors: Sky Anaconda (which is older and arrived first) and Shaman Tapir. This creates a division within the Tatuyo society between the *Huna* (a cluster of five clans) and the *Pamoa Maha* ('Armadillo people'), who live farther away from the other groups. Linguistically, although they regard themselves as speaking one language, the Tatuyo also report clear sociolectal differences in the speech of clans belonging to these two lineages (Bidou, 1976). As a result, the dialectal differences correlate with geographical distance and both to a dispute in the group's descent ideology that creates a fracture in their patrilineal phratric system.

In more complex phratric arrangements, however, agnatic groups such as Tukano and Bará, *Kotiria* and *Wa'ikhana*, *Hanerã* and *Yibá Masa*, *Ide Masa* and Letuama, Taiwano and Karapanã, etc., are also united by a common descent ideology but are split across different language boundaries. As we see, the patrilineal descent ideology that unites clans and creates a notion of a common language within the descent group is complemented by a tendency towards segmentation and fission along certain levels of social units, which translates into sociolectal differences among the clans, or distinct languages among more complex phratric clusters.

Jackson (1983:173) and Gómez-Imbert (1993:252) have stressed the apparent paradoxical fact that groups that are part of the same phratry tend to have languages with less lexical similarities than affinal groups. On the other hand, Jean Jackson's Bará interlocutors suggested that "there is a close genetic relationship between sibling-related languages and a distant genetic relationship between affinal related languages" (Jackson, 1983:172-3). Thus, there is an inherent contradiction in the linguistic ideology among groups of Pirá-Cananarí, Central Vaupés and Headwaters areas. This stems from an ambivalent role of languages, namely, being coextensive to a descent group ideology as well as a way to create conviviality within alliance clusters.

In other words, there is a pattern of interplay of social relations of agnatism and affinity, coupled with a tendency towards differentiation and counter-hierarchy within a patrilineage and, additionally, a tendency to create ethnic bonds among preferential allies. This leads us to hypothesize that while affinal relations create linguistic homogenization among intermarrying groups, the patrilineal phratric organization of URN societies, especially among Tukanoan speaking groups, creates strong dynamics that cause social segmentation and language splits, while simultaneously being too weak to maintain or develop enduring linguistic boundaries around

members of a phratric cluster. This hypothesis has an immediate correlation with territorial organization, descent ideology and political social units. For instance, Århem (1981) analyzes Makuna social organization as based on a system of segmentary alliance, where consanguineal relatives slowly drift apart, as they concentrate on affines in new places, thus producing a spatial organization of small and localized groups arranged via alliances. That is, affinal groups more often share a common territory and a common or close language compared with their agnatic kin. From a more idealized perspective, more downriver sites of mythical transformations are shared among consanguineal and affinal groups, such as the Tukano, Desana, *Wa'ikhana,* and others who arose in Ipanoré on the Vaupés River. However, more upriver sites are related to more specific social units, such as clans. Thus, the descent ideology expressed in the notion of mythical territory is a dimension emphasizing both consanguinity and affinity, at different scales (see Andrello, 2020), similar to how languages are used to identify and distinguish patrilines or affines.

In addition, the boundaries of each phratry are difficult to delimit. Moreover, they are flexible and changeable depending on the context. C. Hugh-Jones (1979: 284) highlights how common it is for certain clans belonging to one descent group (e.g., the Tatuyo) to bear agnatic and hierarchical relations to one, but not all clans from other groups (e.g., the Bará). A more extreme example relates to the Tuyuka and Makuna, who belong to the same phratry, and both agree that the Taiwano and Karapanã are also included; however, for the *Ide Masa* Makuna, these groups are their uterine siblings. Nevertheless, the Makuna regard the Letuama and Bará as older and younger brother agnatic kin, whereas the Tuyuka exclude these peoples, but include the Arapaso, Mirití-Tapuya, and Tariano (Cabalzar, 2008; Cayón, 2018). In both cases, the limits of the wider unit do not match. Furthermore, the fact that Makuna and Bará (specifically from the *Wamitañarã* clan) cannot intermarry does not change their relationship to the Tuyuka, for these often marry Bará, and their languages seem much closer to each other than to Makuna.

In the end, in regards to phratric units, there are more languages than exogamic units in the Central Vaupés and Headwaters area, which makes them the most linguistically exogamous context we discuss in this article. So, even though intermarriage occurs across groups with distinctly perceived linguistic boundaries and descent lines, neither language nor descent is sufficient for delimiting social exogamy. In fact, language boundaries are aligned with an intermediate phratric unit, which perhaps is a viable social unit to concentrate fundamental ethnic markers of patrilineal ideology, such as language and shared descent, but is insufficient to sustain social exogamy. This "viable social unit" is closely related to several ethnogenetic processes and formation of social units as discussed by Andrello (2016). Language boundaries are, then, projections of a patrilineal ideology similar to how social units (clans, phratries), a common descent ideology, and the naming of social units also are. The boundaries between these dimensions are not always coterminous, but they seem to be dealing with similar problems and following similar principles.

Provisional summary

As we can gather from the previous sections, there are several forms of possible alignments between language, exogamy and descent. Here we recapitulate some of them in order to highlight the main divergent patterns within a more objective formula. Starting from the idealized model of "one language, one descent group, and one exogamous group", we noticed that this model never, in fact, exists.

- **Baniwa-Koripako:** 1 language divided into at least 3 dialects, spoken by a set of clans that are divided into 3 agnatic phratric clusters, forming 3 exogamic groups but having a common descent ideology with respect to a single mythical site of emergence and creator.
- **Hup:** 1 language with 3 dialects, spoken by clans divided into 2 exogamic sets, following 2 brothers as mythical ancestors, where language does not align completely with each exogamic set or clan boundaries, but with the residential group.

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- **Kubeo:** 1 language divided into at least 3 dialects, spoken by 4 or 5 exogamous groups, which are divided into 3 main descent groups.
- **Makuna:** 1 language, spoken by 5 exogamic groups, which are also divided into 4 descent groups concerning their mythical ancestors and sites of emergence.
- **Tanimuka**: 1 language spoken by 2 (previously) exogamic groups, following from 2 brothers as mythical ancestors, and having 1 common place of mythical emergence.
- **Tatuyo:** 1 language divided in 2 sociolects, spoken by 1 exogamic set of clans which, although having the same place of emergence, are separated by two mythical ancestors and disputes of hierarchical position.
- **Bará:** similar to Tatuyo, except that clans have only one mythical ancestor but two different sites of mythical emergence.

While the patterns above privilege alignments from the perspective of language boundaries, different patterns exist if we assume the perspective of the descent group or the exogamous group. These other perspectives might be more complex, though, to the extent that descent will inevitably depend on the scale, and exogamy on the perspective of each group or person due to the complex phratric arrangements. This is especially the case if we also take into account the split of patrilines and matrilines in defining units of consanguinity, affinity and descent. Hence, because language boundaries are emically defined and determine an inherent scale to the system, it remains a simpler feature to name, discuss and operationalize viable social units. This could explain why language ideologies have become such an important aspect for how the societies of the URN reflect on their world.

The role of languages in the co-fabrication of exogamy and ethnicity

The facts discussed in the previous sections reveal how languages are used as a means to define identity and alterity within and across groups related as consanguines or affines. Indeed, the recognition of certain linguistic markers (e.g., sounds, words, constructions, etc.) as indexical to different kinds of social identities (Silverstein, 2003), as well as the social, cultural, and political demarcation of linguistic boundaries (e.g., language vs. dialect) across social groups (Gal and Irvine, 1995) are ideological constructs elaborated in the same contexts where social exogamy and patrilineal descent ideology are co-fabricated.

As expressed by Kroskrity (2010), language ideologies are representations produced by specific social groups about linguistic and discourse traits, which connect the acts of speech and use of verbal language with social structure and other kinds of symbolic representations. There are multiple and even contradicting forms of language ideologies within the same social group, which ultimately follows from multifaceted social and symbolic structures of a society. The scope of languages and their overlap with units of social exogamy can be generally referred to as linguistic exogamy and linguistic endogamy. In a general sense, linguistic exogamy is a sociolinguistic pattern where intermarriage is obligatory or common between couples that speak different languages (Singer and Harris, 2006). Conversely, linguistic endogamy—an overwhelmingly more common pattern worldwide—is obligatory or common between couples that speak the same main language.

As we saw for the URN region, the practice of linguistic exogamy and endogamy varies from sub-area to sub-area. From an ideological point of view, linguistic endogamy and exogamy are justified through different reasons and can be illustrated by the quotes below:

Bará: "My brothers are those who speak my own language. I call Tukanos 'brothers' because we used to speak the same language. They started to speak differently, and now they speak another language entirely. But we are still close, and I still call them 'brothers." (Jackson, 1983: 92).

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Kubeo - Phratry 3: "When they moved to this river, they found their in-laws among the Kubeo speaking peoples; that is how we ended up speaking the language of our mothers" (Chacon's fieldnotes).

Baniwa-Koripako: "For us, we are the Medzeniakonai […] 'People of the Original Language'. When we refer to the Medzeniakonai, we refer to the 16 clans that compose the nation of the Baniwa and Koripako language" ["*Para nós, somos os Medzeniakonai [...] 'Povos de língua original'. Quando nós nos referimos aos Medzeniakonai, nós nos referimos aos 16 clãs que compõem a nação de língua Baniwa e Koripako*"] (FOIRN, 2019: 164, our translation).

The first quote by a Bará speaker illustrates a strong stance on the relationship between language and patrilineages (Jackson, 1983). The second by a Kubeo speaker explains why his group now shifted to Kubeo and does not speak their otherwise original Arawakan language *Inkatsa* (Chacon, 2013b). And the third quote by a Baniwa-Koripako speaker (actually, writer) emphasizes the relationship between common language and common descent among intermarrying social groups. Each quote is based on assumptions of a sociolinguistic norm. For the Bará, language and patrilineages are seen as normally linked. For the Kubeo, the language spoken by one's mother and one's affines is normalized into a more inclusive ethno-linguistic assemblage. For the Baniwa-Koripako, agnatism and affinity are linked by the same language and a shared descent ideology.

We propose that, in the URN, linguistic exogamy and endogamy are two co-existing principles aimed at co-fabricating different kinds of sociolinguistic relations: linguistic exogamy functions as a way to delineate agnatic (patrilineal) exogamic units across phratric clusters, while linguistic endogamy functions to create a more inclusive ethnicity through more cognatic configurations such as alliance clusters. Endogamy and exogamy appear as two trends determined by complex social and cultural relations at different scales, which take a strong or a weak form in a continuum—rather than as two opposing categories—when seen from the perspective of a prescriptive ideology and the actual practices of social groups.

We can explore the gradual nature of these principles and how they coexist as two underlying forces by comparing the number of exogamic units and the number of languages across each context. We can objectively measure whether each context is more linguistically endogamous or more exogamous by dividing the number of languages within each area by the number of exogamic units. Any result equal to or less than one represents a situation of higher linguistic endogamy and, thus, the use of languages to create a common identity across intermarrying groups. Results above one represent situations of higher linguistic exogamy, where languages are used to delineate phratric units that often conflate a patrilineal descent group with an exogamic unit. This is summarized in Table 5, which considers each regional context, with clarifications in the footnotes accompanying our total number of exogamic units per area.

ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT	LANGUAGES	EXOGAMIC UNITS	RATIO OF LANGUAGE/EXOGAMIC UNIT
Headwaters	7	3[8]	2.30
Central Vaupés	6	4[9]	1.50
Hup-Yuhup	2	2[10]	1.00
Mirití-Apaporis	2	9[11]	0.45
Pirá-Cananarí	3	7[12]	0.43
Baniwa-Koripako	1	3[13]	0.30
Kubeo	1	5[14]	0.20

table 5. Ratio of perceived language boundaries to exogamic units.

8. Tatuyo & Siriano & Pisamira, 2. Karapanã & Tuyuka, 3. Yurutí & Bará.

9. Tariana & Desano, 2. Wa'ikhana & Kotiria, 3. Arapaso, 4. Tukano.

10. Two exogamic sets of clans spanning across Yuhup and Hup speaking residential groups.

11. Yukuna-speaking groups, plus 6. Tanimuka, 7. Letuama, 8. Yahuna, 9. Yawijeje.

12. Kabiyarí, 2. Ide Masa, 3. Emoa, 4. Heañarã, 5. Yiba Masa & other Barasana lineages, 6. Tawaiano, 7. Ɨmɨa Masa.

13. Waliperidakenai, 2. Adazaneni, 3. Hohoodeni.

14. Hehenawa, 2. Biowa & Miaðawa & Hɨrɨwa, 3. Yuremawa and related clans, 4. Yúriparamenã, 5. Biowa.

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The first thing to notice from Table 5 is that the number of languages within an ethnographic context is not directly related to the number of exogamic unities. This shows that language boundaries are not primarily used to demarcate exogamic units but is largely related to demarcating identity across agnatic and/or cognatic social units. Linguistic exogamy takes its strongest form in the social groups of the Central Vaupés and Headwaters areas, where there are more languages than exogamous groups, and the ratio of languages per exogamic units is above 1. In such contexts of prominent linguistic exogamy, language boundaries are more exclusive, aimed at magnifying differences across affines and agnates (Jackson, 1983: 172). The opposite pattern is found in Baniwa-Koripako, Kubeo, Mirití-Apaporis, Pirá-Cananarí, where several exogamous groups within alliance clusters speak the same language and the ratio of languages per exogamic units is below 1. This pattern suggests that language boundaries are defined as more inclusive, aimed at minimizing social and linguistic differences across affines (Hill, 1996). Right in the middle, the Hup and Yuhup in the Interfluvial area display the most straightforward alignment of language and exogamous units. Such a contrast between co-existing forms of linguistic exogamous and endogamous intermarriage patterns in overlapping geographical setting suggests local differentiation processes between Tukanoan, Arawakan and Naduhup speaking peoples.

Thus, languages, lects and other ethnic markers are used as fluid constructs that delineate social boundaries and networks in more precise or fuzzy ways. For instance, a unit such as a clan will unite its members, at least ideally, by having the same mythical ancestor, the same place of mythical emergence and the same sociolect (the latter seems the only feature absent in Naduhup clans). On the other hand, clans might participate in social contexts where they share with their affines—and not only with other clans forming a phratry—a same or very similar language and ideology of descent. This shows that the dynamics of languages, lects and other ethnic markers can be used to build sameness and otherness within and across agnatic kin as well as among affines and co-affines in principled and varied ways. This not only reflects social organization but is a means to shape the very foundation of kinship across and within social units. This is schematically summarized in Table 6, followed by generalizations about three basic ideological tendencies regarding the alignment of language and social units in the URN region, which can be identified as a trend among the three major ethnolinguistic groups of the area (see also Vidal, 1999):

	CONSANGUINITY	AFFINITY
Distinction	Lects differentiate phratric social units	Lects differentiate affinal groups
Identification	Lects unify phratric social units	Lects unify affinal groups

table 6. Languages as a means to create ethnic relations across kins and affines.

- **Naduhup:** lects unify individuals from the same residential groups, both consanguines and affines, but may differ among members of a phratric cluster, even across people from the same clan; thus, language boundaries are projected from the perspective of the topolect, which is a corollary of cognatic relations in alliance clusters established from the perspective of residential groups.

- **Eastern Tukanoan**: lects unify members of the residential group, the patriclan, and intermediate phratric units formed by the aggregation of patriclans; at the same time, lects typically also differentiate members from different patriclans, whether kin or affine. Thus, language boundaries are projected from the patrilect, which is a corollary of patrilineal descent and virilocal residential groups.

- **Arawakan**: lects unify members of the residential group with larger patrilineal phratric units and preferential allies; thus, topolect, patrilect and matrilect converge and create language boundaries as a corollary of multiscale alliance clusters.

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Rather than separate entities, these three patterns developed from a set of common social and cultural principles that have been subject to distinct sociolinguistic situations. They reflect a dual tendency towards the construction of shared cultural and linguistic identities and simultaneously towards segmentation and distinctiveness. These tendencies were expressed by S. Hugh-Jones (1993, 1995) as two distinct and complementary ways that Tukanoans conceptualize their social relationships. The first emphasizes a male view of the house or *maloca*, by privileging group autonomy, unilineal descent, exogamy, agnatic ties, and internal hierarchy as expressed in clan rituals or *yuruparí* (Hee House), particularly the link with the founding ancestor and the ranking order of a sibling group. The second stresses equality, interdependence, and consanguineal ties as manifested in daily life and expressed in food exchange rituals (Food-Giving House), or *dabucurís* between neighboring communities, underlying co-residence, endogamy, and the extended family or consanguineal group formed around ties of commensality. As we have show, rather than being a monolithic emblem of patrilineal identity, language in the URN can be seen as a means that variably delineates and co-fabricates these two distinct and complementary dimensions of social life.

Conclusion

In this article we have explored distinct patterns of how languages, exogamous social units and descent ideologies are related in URN societies. Through a comparison of the various studies and various situations within the URN, we highlighted how those notions operate in a convergent and yet independent basis, creating a sort of parametric variation that can be useful to shed light on other contexts of multilingualism and interethnic relations in Amazonia and beyond. Through an extensive survey of the ethnographic and sociolinguistic literature, we adopted and developed ways to describe the fluidity of social formations over time and space, as well as the many nuances in the way URN societies practice language exogamy and endogamy. Although the URN region has been known for its strong ideology connecting linguistic exogamy and patrilineality, we have shown that endogamy is even more frequent across different scenarios, both from a practical and ideal point of view. In fact, albeit with different emphases, linguistic endogamy and exogamy co-exist in every society in the URN, and constitute two different forms of interethnic relations, where linguistic endogamy reinforces alliance-building processes and linguistic exogamy helps to shape the diffuse limits of the patrilineal exogamic group. Given that language is one among other possible ethnic markers, and that on its own no ethnic marker is either necessary or sufficient to demarcate the exogamous group at any level of the system, we find the function of languages in URN societies connected to an assemblage of forces that build sameness and otherness within and across social units defined by affinity and/or common descent. This fluid and dynamic use of languages is at the same time grounded in social structure and interethnic relations, and is consistent with the fact that language is itself a means to reinforce and change social and cultural relations over time.

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