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**¿QUÉ LENGUA HABLAS?:
THE INTERACTION OF LANGUAGES, EDUCATION AND
IDENTITY IN A MAJORITY/MINORITY
SOCIOLINGUISTIC SETTING**

by

LUISA FERNANDA HURTADO IGLESIAS

B.A., THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, 2021

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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May, 2024

DEDICATION

A mi primera profesora y mamá, Sandra, quien me llevó de la mano a mi primer salón de clases.

A mi papá, quien me ha enseñado a disfrutar de los momentos pequeños de la vida y el valor de tener un balance en ella.

A mi hermano, por ser mi modelo a seguir. Quien a pesar de la distancia, que siempre nos ha separado, ha sido un constante apoyo.

A mis abuelas, que me impulsaron a ser una mujer independiente, fuerte y resiliente, igual que todas ellas.

A la memoria de mis abuelos, Rodolfo y Alirio, que donde sea que estén me han dado fortaleza para seguir adelante y llegar a lugares que nunca imaginé posibles.

A Alfonso, quien sin tener un lazo de sangre, actúa y me quiere como un abuelo.

A mi mejor amiga, que me acompaña en cada una de mis metas y mis sueños.

A Bruno, Holly, Bella y Kovu.

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**¿Qué lengua hablas?: The Interactions of Languages, Education and Identity in a
Majority/Minority Sociolinguistic Setting.**

By

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B.A. Psychology and Spanish , The University of New Mexico, 2021

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Abstract

This thesis presents a comparative analysis of language dynamics in two distinct contexts: the *Tres Fronteras* region, where Spanish and Portuguese intersect, and Cauca, Colombia, where Namtrik and Spanish coexist. Through qualitative research methods including interviews and ethnographic observations, the study examines the roles of these languages in shaping social interactions, cultural identities, and community dynamics.

By exploring language use patterns, attitudes, and policies in these regions, the thesis seeks to uncover similarities and differences in the ways Spanish, Portuguese, and Namtrik influence individuals' sense of belonging and cultural expression. Furthermore, the study examines the impact of historical, social, and political factors on language maintenance and shift in these diverse linguistic landscapes.

Findings from this research contribute to our understanding of language diversity and identity construction in borderlands and indigenous communities. The insights gained can inform language policy and educational initiatives aimed at promoting linguistic inclusivity and cultural preservation in multicultural societies.

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Introduction

In countries and regions where two languages coexist, there is a tendency to rely on the dominant language. As stated by Treffers-Daller (2019) societal dominant languages are those languages that are either stated as official by governmental agencies or those used more frequently on a day-to-day basis. With said conditions, speakers will most likely rely on the dominant language when it comes to daily activities, as a result, building their social and linguistic identity around the language or languages practiced around them. When it comes to linguistic identity, it is common to correlate language dominance with factors such as nationality, ethnicity, and language. This project intends to explore the socio-political structures surrounding languages and the relations that intersect the development of the individual linguistic identity as well as the consequences for educational policy at the micro and macro level.

The innate necessity of belongingness can be perceived in any type of living being. As humans, language is one of those traits that determine which community or communities we belong to. This type of division has led the world to create structures that satisfy and strengthen such social groups, such is the case when we think about national or official language(s). Rajagopalan (2001) mentions that: “By the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the idea of nationhood had become closely linked with the concept of a language ... and the whole equation was summed up in the slogan 'One nation, one people, one language' (20)”. This conception of language impules the idea that in order to create a functional unity (country or nation) linguistic uniformity is necessary. This also gave birth to the idea that language could be used as part of the political discourse, which became a weapon towards those languages spoken by minorities. Thus, making political structures push communities to

feel closer to each other, and therefore, individuals were forced to create their social identities around what seemed to be the strongest aspect, language.

Now, it is important to lay out the aspects of the coexistence of languages within one geographical space. Penny (2004), states that languages can only be made official by governmental entities, therefore we can state that, as societies, we do have spacial limitations on languages. Unfortunately, laws and statutes can sometimes neglect aspects of the linguistic reality of language users: linguistic influence in borderspaces, non-dominant languages, and the vastly influenced dialects that can result from language contact. All of which pose obstacles and conflicts when it comes to language revitalization parameters and success.

In recent years, work on minority/majority languages has been primarily explored when it comes to widely spoken languages (English, Spanish, French, Dutch, etc). Even when there is current work involving indigenous languages, there is still a gap when it comes to comparing the interactions between co-dominant languages and dominant/non-dominant languages that coexist in the same geographical space. Studies have explored the social value of a language (De Olivera, Miranda & Figueira-Cardoso, 2022) and how said social value can be reflected in educational and linguistic policies (Rajagopalan, 2001; Nobre, 2012). However, it is necessary to lay a foundation that explores such perceptions of language to understand current and future educational policies and practices.

This project aims to find what language attitudes exist and what the sociolinguistic perception of the indigenous languages in the department¹ of Cauca in Colombia (Figure 1), more specifically in the Misak community and inhabitants of Popayán. At the same time, the project will make a comparison with previous studies made by Moreno Fernández (2006) on

¹ Department refers to the geographical and political division of regions within Colombia.

the *Tres Fronteras*² region in the Amazons (Figure 1) to understand the differences that exist when it comes to the coexistence of majority language setting versus a minority/majority setting. This project will focus on the intersection of the languages spoken in the regions stated above; Spanish/Namtrik and Spanish/Portuguese respectively. This is with the objective of decodifying the social positionality and repercussions language attitudes have on linguistic identity, sociocultural identities and educational practices.

Figure 1.

Locations in which language contact occurs.



² The tres fronteras region refers to the geographical point in which the borders of Colombia, Brazil, and Perú meet within the Amazon forest.

Language Functions

Despite the many theories and studies that have been done on language, there are only approximations to what language can be defined as. This is due to the different angles from which language can be seen and analyzed. If we do a quick search online we can encounter multiple definitions of language. For example, the Oxford English Dictionary defines the noun *language* as “The system of spoken or written communication used by a particular country, people, community, etc.” Similarly, Caseriu (1951) defines language as the system that allows two or more individuals to express their ideas, to communicate. With the brief definitions mentioned above, we can say that one of the primary functions of language is to serve the purpose of communication, but it cannot be seen as the *only* function of said system.

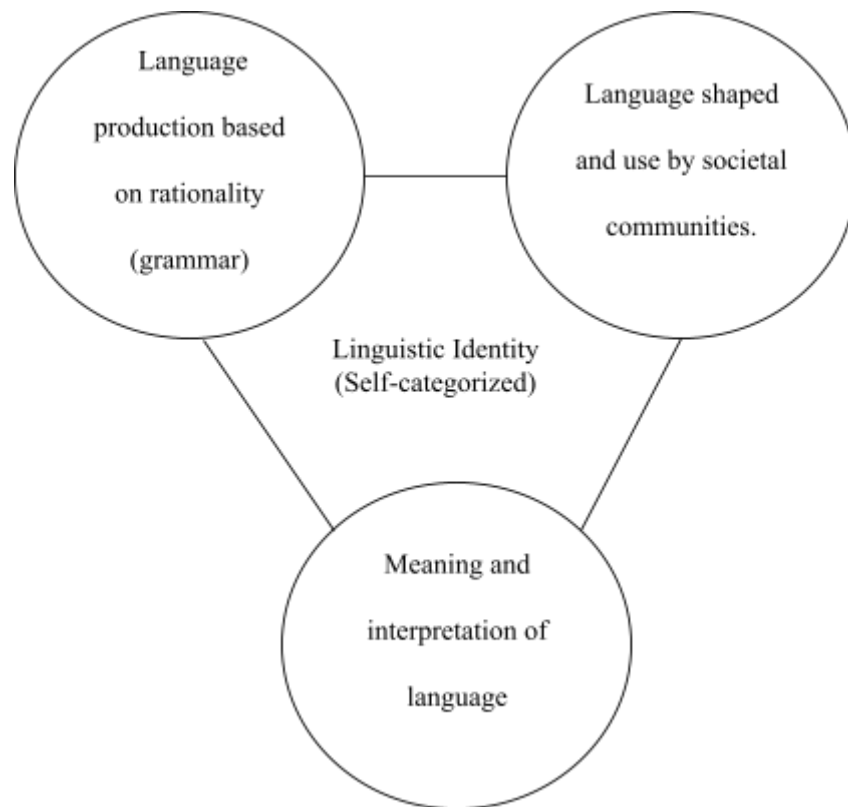
The field of linguistics in intersections with other disciplines like psychology, anthropology, philosophy, etc., have explored the definition of language beyond the means of communication (Fabbro et al., 2022). This project is mainly concerned with the psychological and sociological aspects of language, therefore we can think of language functions within those fields. Now, systems of communication cannot exist unless there is a community that allows the practice of said linguistic acts (Caseriu, 1951; Yule, 2010; Fabbro, et al, 2022). Thus, we can state that language can be perceived as a characteristic of a community and as such can be identified as part of the community identity. Here, we have defined what I argue is the *second* function of language: An essential aspect of communal identity that affects the perception of self-identity when language systems co-exists in the same geographical space.

Identity and Society

After defining the functions of language in terms of sociological and psychological interactions, this section will try to define *linguistic identity* and its role within the *social identity theory* (Stets & Burke, 2000) when viewed within a community context. Part of the social aspect of a human being is the capacity to belong to multiple communities, however, self-categorization will show an inclination towards a “main” or dominant community to which the individual shares more similarities with (Turner et al, 1987 as cited in Stets & Burke, 2000). Something that is important to note here is that identity is not rigid, on the contrary, identity is flexible and as we will see later in the discussion section, identity can also be hybrid. Evans (2016), states that identity has three components: 1. Sociocultural identity: constructed based on our social context and social language, 2. Identity of the objective rational mind: concerned with the grammatical and rational language and, 3. The identity of the existential self: the subjectivity that interacts with meaning and interpretations of language (Figure 2). This subcategorization of linguistic identity allows us to expand the field of action that composes the way in which an individual is able to self-categorize and present themselves to those outside of their own communities.

Figure 2

Linguistic identity components - adapted from Evans (2016).

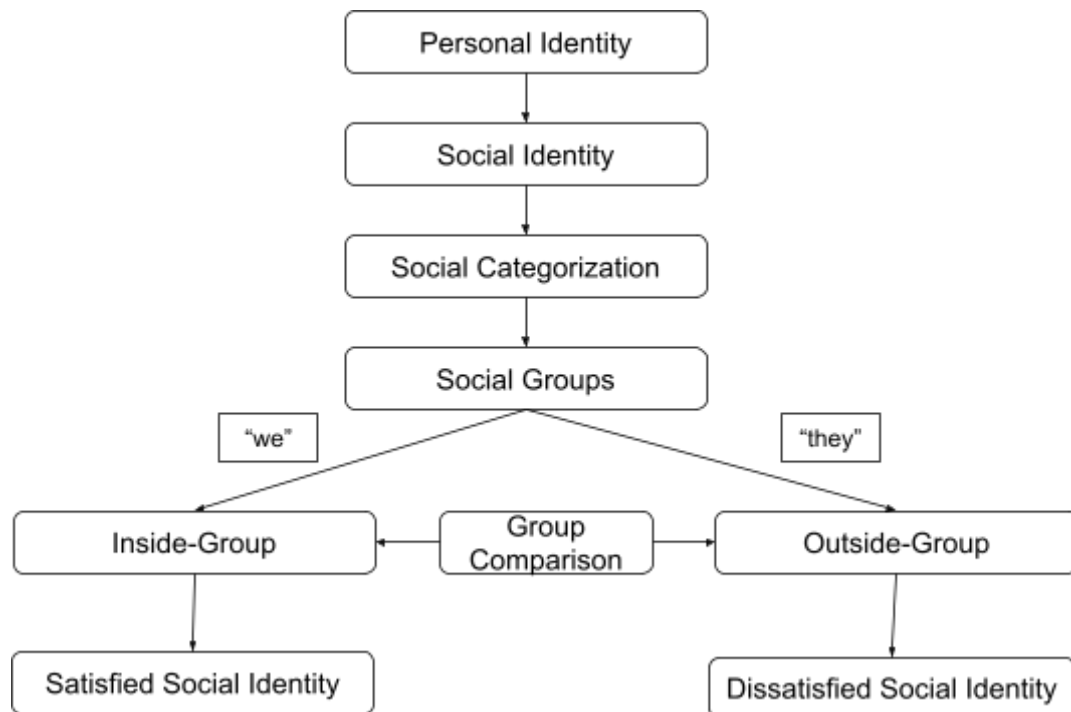


As mentioned above, a single individual can belong to multiple communities, as such identity will more likely rely on self-identification or self-categorization (Meyerhoff, 2011). Norton (2000), drawing ideas from Bourdieu's work states that language cannot be understood without the umbrella of social relations. Therefore, we cannot look at the linguistic identity and separate the individual from the bigger community. The role of identity of an individual within their own communities and the position of themselves against outsiders is a key concept that can be explained by the Social Identity Theory of Henri Tajfel (Figure 3). Under this theory, identity is built from our individual characteristics (age, gender, race, location, social class, etc.). This familiarity will give the space for the conformation of social groups (culture, traditions, language, etc.). Said characteristics carry social weight that will then *mark* the group and its members, it can either be favorable or unfavorable when it

gets compared to socially powerful groups (Ramin & Yadollahi, 2014; Meyerhoff, 2011). As such, hegemonic groups will hold privileged perceptions and therefore satisfy their social identity for in-group settings. The opposite can be also observed when it comes to minorities, Ramin & Yadollahi (2014) mention that devaluation and stigmatization can often lead to conflicts reflected on the inner individual identity or outer conflicts that are reflected on the social groups' resistance to hegemonic groups.

Figure 3

Tajgel's Social Identity Theory



Language Perceptions

There are many factors that can influence the value of a language, (Evans, 2016), however, when we think about social value we can highlight two main aspects: history and

economical power. Norton (2000) notes that languages like English, Spanish and French are highly valued in society given their role during the discovery and conquest of the American continent. In more recent years we can talk about the relevance of said languages based on the number of speakers as well. However, recent movements focused on postcolonialism have brought to the table discussions focused on the value of native/indigenous languages across the globe. Bastardas-Boada (2017) states that the labeling of languages as majority/minority are mainly based on the power dynamics that already exist. He attributes demographics, economical and political power as main determinants of the division. Not only is it important to understand the background of the languages, but the influence said perspectives have on the current attitudes that surround minority/majority languages. This topic will be explored more in depth in the literature review section.

Majority and Minority Languages

This project's research was conducted in the town Silvia and Popayán in Cauca (Colombia), in which Spanish, Namtrik, and other indigenous languages, like Nasa Yuwe, Quichua, and other dialects of Namtrik like kokonuko, totoró, coexist (Instituto Caro y Cuervo). As mentioned before, the results of this research will be compared to those obtained by Moreno Fernandez (2006), which were conducted in the region of *Tres Fronteras*. This region is the land in which the borders of Colombia, Brazil and Perú meet (Graphic 1). In this space Spanish and Portuguese are the most commonly spoken among the population, however there is still the existence and practice of indigenous languages in the region.

It was mentioned above that languages are structured through top-down processes. Thus, being often impelled by governmental or hegemonic communities. It is important to highlight that the current linguistic landscape of the American continent is due to the colonization process. We also have to recognize that said process started during the XVI century and the consequences are still visible to this day. This section will then explore the social and cultural aspects that have a role within the definition of majority or minority language.

Political and Educational Structure

1. Brazil:

The current constitution (1988), mentions in Chapter 2, Article 13 that Portuguese is the official language of Brazil. Later, in Chapter 3, Article 210, Section 2: it states that the educational structure should be administered in Portuguese, but that in the case of indigenous communities, they are free to implement their language and their educational principles. The Projeto da lei 2,935 from 2022 briefly talks about the necessities that indigenous communities are currently facing and proposes plans to take action and grant the corresponding educational rights. Nevertheless, the same project of the law states “The curriculum of secondary education includes, obligatory, that study of the English languages and could offer, as an elective, preferably Spanish, according to the availability of local offer, and the schedules defined by the educational systems.” We could understand this statement as an indication of the linguistic hierarchy that exists within the political structure of the Brazilian education system. This would rank languages as follows: 1. Portuguese, 2. English, 3. Spanish, and although not mentioned, 4. Native languages.

2. Colombia:

The Political Constitution of Colombia (1991) states in its 10th article that: “Spanish is the official language. The languages and dialects of the ethnic groups are also considered official in their own territories....”. Although the law states that there is a multilingual environment within the country, there is still a lack of information and execution from the government’s side. The law 1331 from 2010 in the Articles 10,11 and 13 state that it is the responsibility of the National Plan of National Development and the Development Plan of Territorial Entities to create and develop the educational plans for the protection and

strengthening of native languages, as well as the protecting of the same on the national territory. On Article 20, it also states that the national, departamental, municipal and communal government should grant the mandatory teaching of native languages, as long as the pedagogical structures exist. However, the General Law for Education (1994) does state that a foreign language is a mandatory subject for any educational institutions within the national territory.

After reviewing the current political state of each country, we can sketch the following diagrams:

Figure 4

Language coexistence in separated geographical spaces based on the model presented by Moreno Fernandez (2006).

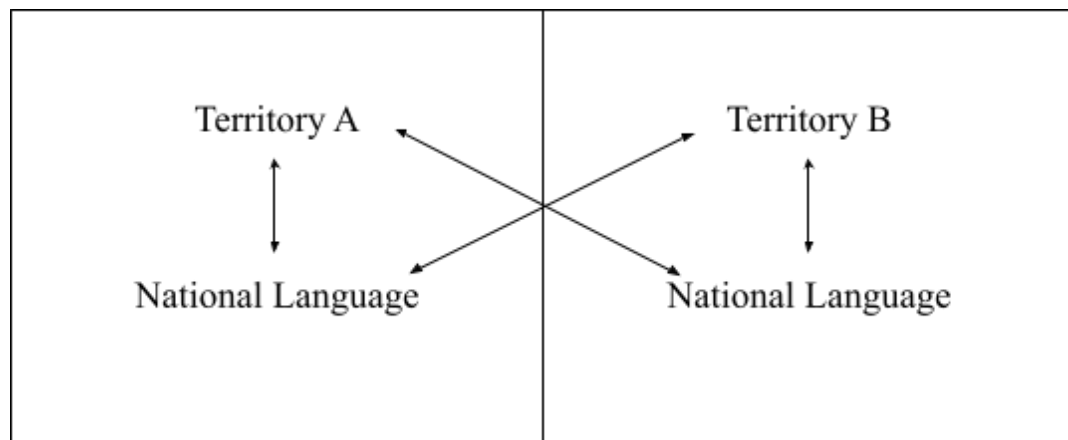


Figure 4, gives a visual representation of the current linguistic situation of the *Tres Fronteras* Region, the arrows represent the coexistence of languages in relation to their territories, which goes beyond the physical borders. As it was observed in the current section, Colombia and Brazil have clear laws regarding the national language of their respective

geographical territories. Spanish and Portuguese, respectively, are considered the national languages and as such are the default languages used for any type of governmental or official procedure. It is necessary to highlight that indigenous languages are still present in the Amazon region. However, due to limited data and time, the present project does not have relevant information about the current sociolinguistic situation of said languages.

Figure 5

Language coexistence in the same geographical space based on the model presented by Moreno Fernandez (2006).

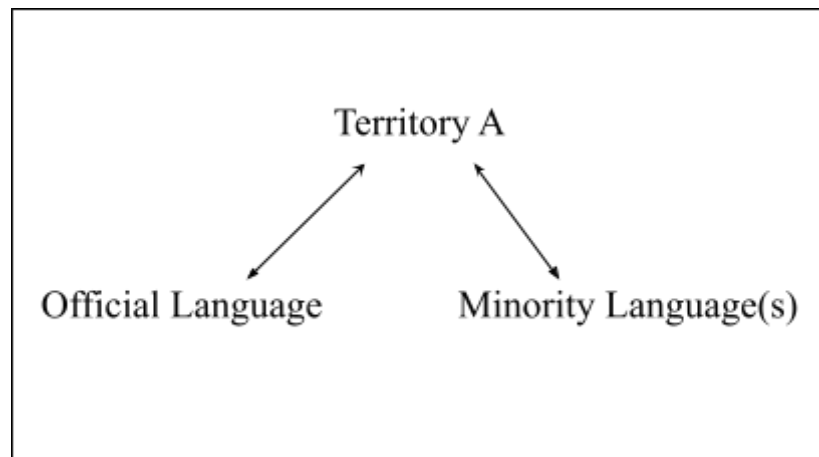


Figure 5, provides a visual representation of the current situation of Cauca, Colombia. Just like the representation on Figure 4, the arrows are a representation of the coexistence of multiple languages within the same geographical space. Hence, if we state that languages can coexist, are key representations of a community's identity; then, we also need to explore the cultural aspects that are intertwined with the language.

Cultural and Historical Landscape

1. Cidades Gemelas (Tabatinga and Leticia)

Also called the sister cities, Leticia and Tabatinga, are located at the shared border between Colombia, Brazil and Perú. Leticia. Due to the high natural diversity and the attractiveness that the Amazons represent, these cities have a constant fluctuation of visitors and share more than just a land border. Leticia, with ~ 48,000 inhabitants and Tabatinga with ~67,000 inhabitants form the biggest population of the central Amazon region that is connected by land (DANE, 2019; IBGE, 2022).

The village of Tabatinga was first reported in the XVI century, when it was registered to the Portuguese empire by a group of Jesuits, which was then claimed as the official border of the empire (Prefeitura de Tabatinga, 2022). On the other hand in 1867 the village of San Antonio was first reported under the Spanish empire, however this territory was considered as part of Perú. This territory didn't become part of the Colombian territory until 1927 with the treaty of Salomón Lozano (Alcaldía de Leticia, 2017). Both territories served as borders between empires and were heavily militarized, however their population was mainly composed of the native communities of the Amazons.

Currently, road access to these regions is very limited. Through air, Leticia's international airport is the only available in the central Amazon area. When it comes to cultural expressions within this region (Riaño Umbarila, 2011) states that culturally these cities are very similar. Their historical backgrounds laid the foundation of similar religious practices, heavily influenced by the traditions of the indigenous communities Ticuna, Cocama and Yagua on both sides of the border.

2. Cauca (Popayán and Silvia)

With a vast diversity in climate and geographical landscape, the department of Cauca has a wide cultural expression. Founded by Sebastian de Belalcazar in 1537, Popayán was once one of the most important cities of the Viceroyalty of New Granada during the colonial period (Alcaldía de Popayan, 2022). In the present, the city's main economic source is agriculture and tourism (DANE, 2019). Currently, the total population of the city rises to ~278.000 inhabitants (DANE, 2019). Due to the internal national conflict, for educational purposes and employability, the mobilization of inhabitants from other zones of the department towards the capital is very high. Given the high fluctuation in its population, the city presents great diversity when it comes to cultural expressions. Even, when the department has about 84 different *Resguardos*³ (CRIC, n.d.) The capital has a strong catholic influence and is easily observable and represented through its iconic white architecture and famous Holy Week celebration.

Not far from the capital, the town of Silvia is the closest urban area to the Resguardo de Guambia, with a population of ~34,000 people (DANE, 2019). This town presents an interesting contrast that can be easily observed, not only through its colonial architecture, but by the strong presence of the Misak community who are easily spotted because of their *Anacos*⁴. This *pueblo* is conformed by ~16,000 (CRIC, n.d.) that are mainly located in the towns of Silvia and Jambaló.

Under the Misak culture⁵, language emerges from the *Nak Chak*⁶ and the caretaker roles, in a most generalized context there is also the role of the Mayores and Mayoras⁷. From

³ Resguardos indígenas refer to the indigenous reservations.

⁴ Traditional Misak costume (Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 2018)

⁵ This information was gathered through a personal interview with one of the *Mayores* (elders).

⁶Fireplace.

⁷ Mayores and Mayoras are the elders of the community, often times the leaders of the Cabildos, also referred as Taita(s) and mamá(s).

their own philosophy, nature provides all their needs and it is their job to protect nature and listen to it. The principal economical source for this community is agriculture, which has led their social activism to recover their ancestral lands since the 80's (Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 2018).

This section offered a small overview of the aspects that influence the denomination of majority vs minority setting. Aspects like inner processes of social perspectives and self-categorization allow individuals to identify themselves within social groups. On the other hand, outer factors like historical aspects, political structures, educational statutes and cultural traditions shape the linguistic setting to which a social group will be placed among other communities. As it was mentioned above, this project explores the positionality of Spanish/Portuguese as two majority or dominant languages and Spanish/Namtrik as majority vs. minority languages, respectively.

Literature Review

We have now laid down a ground for the distinction between majority and minority languages. However, it is necessary to look at literature that exists regarding the linguistic perceptions and attitudes in each region, and more than just taking a look at it, reviewing the role that language perception and attitudes play within language maintenance. Gardner and Lambert (1972) found that, in Canada, children's favorable and unfavorable attitudes towards foreign languages had a correlational impact on the motivation they had towards acquiring said language. Similar results were found by Hidalgo (1986) who analyzed the preference displayed between Spanish and English in the border region of El Paso, United States and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Her findings illustrate the role of economy, since the results suggest a high favorable preference towards learning English given the employment opportunities that are open for individuals. It is important to recognize that perceptions and attitudes are created by the same society, however institutions are the ones that perpetuate said attitudes (Brauman & Briggs, 1990; Mertz, 1998). Therefore, we can state that language attitudes and perceptions are a good indicator of the likeliness of an individual to learn and maintain a language.

1. Cidades Gemelas (Tabatinga and Leticia)

Leticia (Colombia) and Tabatinga (Brazil) are towns that not only share a common border and territory, they also share many cultural and linguistic features. De Campos Barbosa (2008) found that citizens from both towns had an embedded differentiation when it came to language usage in different geographical spaces. The author states that individuals did not perceive Spanish or Portuguese as a less valuable language and in fact acknowledged that each language was official in its own country. This reinforces the idea that language

contact does not necessarily mean language mixture and in fact can co-exist without having a negative impact.

Around the same time, Rojas Molina (2008) found that the linguistic attitudes from the citizens were often favorable. However, the author did find that when comparing the dialect of Leticia with dialects from cities like Bogotá, the perceptions were more disfavorable. Similar situation happened when comparing the dialect of Tabatinga with dialects from São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro. The informants from this study did show more preference from the Leticianos towards using Portuguese when the situation needed it, the author claims that this is most likely due to the attraction that they might feel towards the language.

On the other hand, more recent studies have found results that could indicate language mixture. Ferreira Rodrigues (2020) and Chinellato Díaz (2021), explain that there is evidence of a hybrid mixture of Spanish and Portuguese in this particular region, the *portunhol leticiano*. The author claims that this type of interlingua is the result of bottom-up conversion in language. This means that, even when the official language of Brazil is Portuguese and the official language of Colombia is Spanish, the influences of both languages have overpassed the *lawful* barriers. However, this is a change that is mostly perceivable when speech was produced in an informal setting. Which is comparable to those previous findings that did take into account more formal situations and language practices in both places.

In her work “Crenças E Atitudes Linguísticas: Aspectos Da Realidade Na Tríplice Fronteira”, the author states that in the southern region of Brazil, which shares a border with Argentina and Paraguay, there has become a consensus that both languages (Spanish and

Portuguese) have become a necessary tool for progress amount the inhabitants of the region (Sabadin, 2013). Similarly, a study done on the northern region of Brazil, which shares a border with Colombia and Perú, found that the participant perceives both languages as necessary given the physical proximity of the countries (Moreno Fernandez, 2006).

2. Cauca (Silvia and Popayán)

As mentioned above, the landscape of Silvia is very interesting given the juxtaposition of cultures that exist in this region. Majority of the work that has been done within the Misak community includes revitalization processes. Astaiza Suarez (2021) explored the diverse existent pedagogical mechanisms that exist from the ethnolinguistic perspectives. In her thesis, the author explores the role of the Nak Chak (*fogón* or fireplace) in the children's educational process. At the same time, the author challenges the current linguistic practices denoting the shortcomings of the revitalization programs.

Unfortunately there is not much literature available for discussion. However, similar practices have been done with nearby indigenous communities in Cauca. Pacho Hurtado (2019) explores the different revitalization pedagogies that have been created by and for the Nasa community. In which the role of cultural identity is constantly highlighted as the main factor that pushes the individual to learn the language. However, the author makes a note on the lack of resources and support from higher political and social institutions. If we take a look at the current statistics from the Colombian Census, they report that 41.6% of the total indigenous population does not understand or speak their community's indigenous language, and about 6.8% does not speak the language but can understand it (DANE, 2019). Although it can be said that one of the reasons behind these percentages of people that do not speak

their indigenous language is the dominance of Spanish within the same linguistic spaces, the social perception of indigenous languages plays a key role in their preservation.

The Current Project

As it was mentioned above, there is not much literature available about the current linguistic attitudes or perceptions of the Misak community, nor is there information about the perceptions that exist outside of the community. Thus, the motivation behind this particular study. It was discussed in previous sections that the relevance of language perception when it comes to language attitudes. At the in-group level, it is key for understanding the social identity of a determined community. On the out-group level, it is also relevant to explore the outsider perceptions since they are indicators of the social positionality of a language. It is important to highlight that both aspects mentioned above can greatly vary when taking into account factors like: gender, age and educational levels.

As such, this study aims to identify and analyze: 1. The linguistic attitudes and perceptions of Namtrik and Spanish within the Misak community in Silvia, 2. The linguistic attitudes and perceptions of native languages and Spanish within the non-indigenous population (self-identified as non-indigenous) of Popayán, 3. Compare the attitudes and perceptions of codominant languages (Spanish-Portuguese) and dominant (Spanish)/nondominant (Namtrik) languages, and 4. Understand how said perceptions play a role in the identity of the communities and the educational policies that each region has.

I predict that, as seen in previous research the majority or dominant languages will display higher social prestige (Moreno Fernandez, 2006; De Campos Barbosa, 2008; Rojas Molina, 2008; Sabadin, 2013; Ferreira Rodrigues, 2020; Chinellato Díaz, 2021) when compared with minority languages. However, there will be cultural significance when it comes to language appreciation from inside and outside the indigenous community.

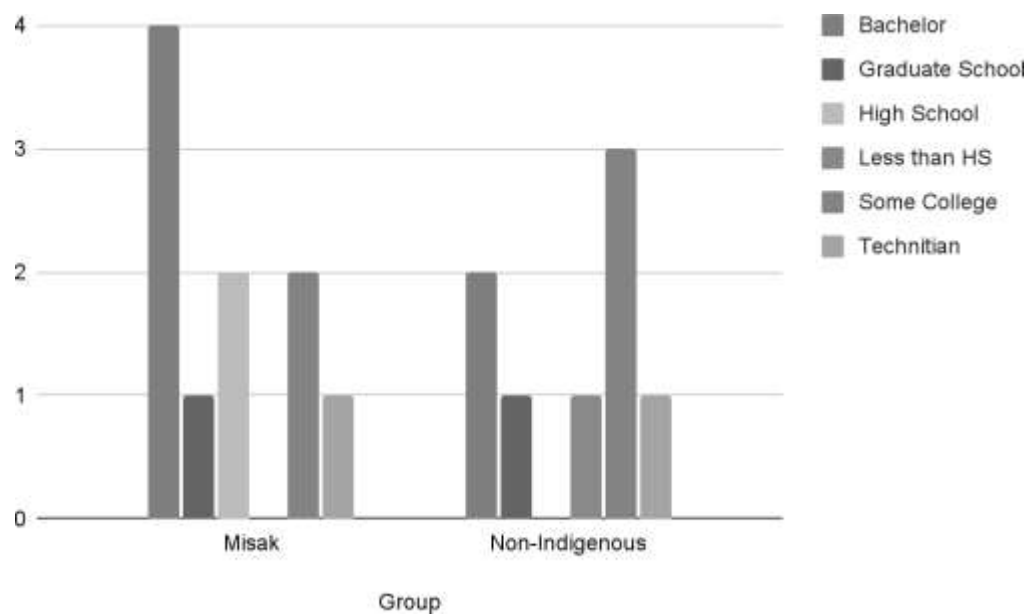
Methodology

Participants

A total of 20 informants over the age of 18 were recruited between the months of June and August 2023. The first group consisted of 10 of the participants, 6 women and 4 men, who self-identified as part of the Misak community and majority of them resided in Silvia, except one participant who lived in Popayán. However, all of them claimed to have lived in Cauca for the majority of their lives. The mean age for this group was 33 with an age range of 18-47. The second group consisted of 10⁸ participants, 5 women and 5 men, who resided in the city of Popayán and self-identified as non-indigenous, all of them claimed to have only lived in Popayán. The mean age for this group was 43 with an age range of 20-66.

Graphic 1

Distribution of educational level of participants by groups.



⁸ Two of the participants from this group withdrew their responses.

All participants claimed to have attended high school (Graphic 1) with the exception of 1 participant that stopped attending school at the age of 16.

The participants were recruited through the snow-ball mechanism. Since the data was collected from two different locations, the support from the Resguardo of Guambía and the linguistic team under the Espiral de Educación was a key asset for data collection.

Participants from the Misak community were recruited through the Espiral de Educación and its collaborators from the linguistic team. The participants from the city of Popayán were recruited through flyers posted around the city, and mutual acquaintances of the researcher's social circle. All participants were presented with a consent form and orally agreed to participate in this study. Participants were asked to answer a small demographic questionnaire in which they self-categorized themselves as indigenous or non-indigenous.

The Interviews

Following the findings of Laihonen (2008) and based on the interviews performed by Fernandez Moreno (2006), it was decided that structured interviews in an informal setting was the best approach. Laihonen (2008) explored the implications of using Conversation Analysis when researching language attitudes. Given the negotiation that exists between the interviewer and interviewee, informal interviews allow the participant to construct their own ideas about the languages that are being discussed. For this particular study, the interviews were semi structured (See Appendix A for full set of questions used) the interviewer had the opportunity to ask for clarification or expansion of certain answers that pertained to this study.

Self-identified indigenous:

Those identifying as indigenous were asked questions about their language usage by implementing the Bilingual Language Profile questionnaire (Birdsong et al, 2012). This self-reporting assessment helps researchers measure the language dominance of the participants through sets of questions that explore language history, language use, language proficiency and language attitudes. This questionnaire was modified to fit the necessities of the present study (Appendix A). After stating an initial contact with the participant an informal interview followed up with questions regarding their general knowledge about indigenous languages in Colombia. Followed by questions regarding their own individual experiences with Namtrik and Spanish. For this group, interviews ranged from 8 minutes to 28 minutes with an average length of 14 minutes.

Self-identify as non-indigenous:

Those who identify as non-indigenous were asked about their basic demographics as well but will be given a different set of sociolinguistic questions. For this population, the interview was also performed in an informal setting. The main distinction made is the questions that were directed towards their perceptions and knowledge of indigenous languages in general (Appendix A). These questions were used to determine what type of attitudes are more common within a community that has a multicultural background and multiple languages coexisting in the same geographical space. For this group, the interview length varied from 6 minutes to 12 minutes with an average length of 9 minutes per interview.

Considering that the study setting can have an impact on the answers given by the participants, the interview was divided into three stages. The first stage consisted on getting

information about the participant: “*¿Podría describirse en algunas palabras?*”, “*¿Qué idiomas habla usted?*”. The second stage targeted language usage: “*¿Qué experiencias tiene con el Namtrik/ Español/ Otros idiomas?*”, “*¿Qué lenguaje(s) usa con su familia / sus amigos?*”. The third stage would then target their language attitudes: “*¿Dónde se habla Namtrik/español?*”, “*¿Cuál es la lengua oficial de Colombia?*”, “*¿Qué palabras se le vienen a la mente cuando yo digo lenguaje Namtrik o lenguaje español?*”, etc. A similar structure of interviews designed was implemented for both groups (See Appendices for full interview structured questions), however it was taken into account that the answers given by the participants triggered further exploration questions that will be explored in the discussion section.

Results

Bilingualism Assessment:

Before moving onto bilingualism dominance, it is important to note that 3 participants had the ability to understand Namtrik, but were not able to speak it. However, they claimed to not fully know Namtrik during the interview. Table 1, has compiled the information reported by the participants regarding the languages⁹ they use. As mentioned in the methodology section, language dominance of indigenous participants was assessed by implementing the BLP (Birdsong et al, 2012). Results showed a mean of 8.06 indicating just a little bit of Spanish dominance over Namtrik (See Appendix B for full BLP scores). However, a standard deviation of $\sigma = 90.37$ indicates a high variance in the reports, in consequence it is difficult to make generalized conclusions, and the scores will be discussed as individual reports. Dominance scores ranged from -100.53 and 150.78. If we take a look at the relation between age and language dominance (Graphic 3) we can observe that age is not a strong indicator of language dominance.

Table 1.

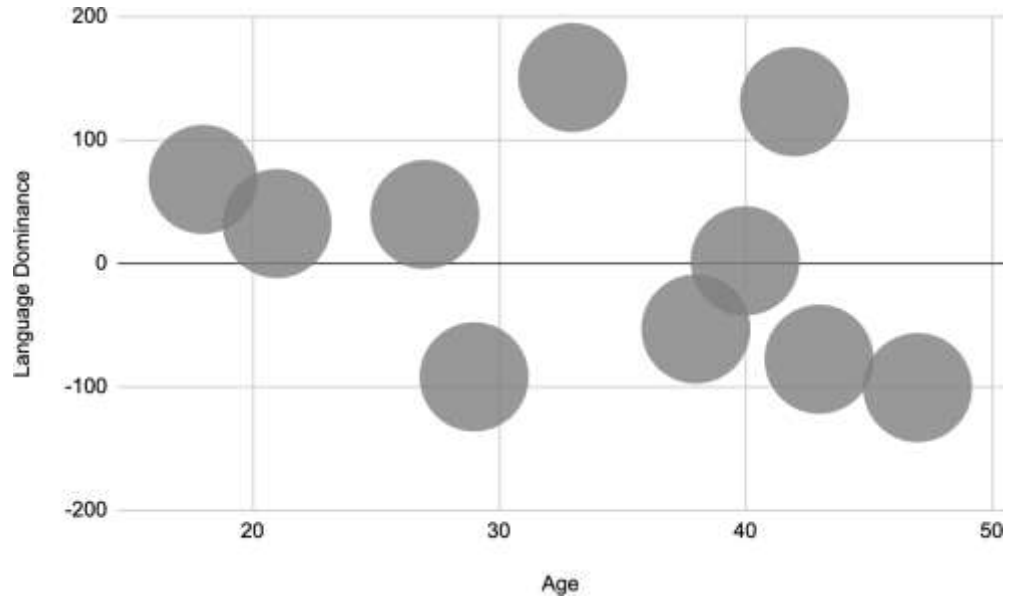
Self-reported Languages spoken by the participants of Silvia.

Languages Spoken	# of Participants
Namtrik	7
Spanish	10
English	1

⁹ One participant mentioned they do use English with their friend groups.

Graphic 3.

BLP scores vs Age



Interview Results

This section will explore the diverse answers obtained through the interviews. It is important to highlight that the format of the interview was semistructured meaning that guidance questions were made, but some answers were expanded through the interview.

Self-categorized Indigenous

Section 1: Language Usages and Individual Experiences:

1.1 Individual Experiences with Namtrik

Participants claimed to use Namtrik under a familiar contexts. 80% of them learned through exposure within their families, primarily grandfathers and elders that were present during their childhood. Only 2 participants reported that they were not taught the language by their immediate families, but that they were learning through their employment environment.

1.2 Individual Experiences with Spanish

Participants claimed to use Spanish with their friends, family and under educational, employment contexts. About 50% of the participants claimed to have learned Spanish upon starting school (about the age of 6). It is important to note that there is some correlation with age group and whether Spanish was acquired at school. The other 40% claimed to have learned Spanish since birth, with their families. One participant stated that he didn't learn Spanish until he started college (between ages 16 and 18).

Section 2: Language attitudes

2.2 Namtrik and Identity

All participants related the language Namtrik to their individual ethnicity (Misak). The most constant expression used was "*lo propio*" (Our own). About 60% of the participants stated that the language is associated with their *Cosmovisión*, the cultural value of the language to keep their cultural traditions and ancestral knowledge. 10% of the participants also linked Namtrik with her land and herself.

2.3 Spanish and Identity

Participants had a mixed reaction towards the linkage of Spanish and their individual identity. While 70% stated the importance and relevance of Spanish for their own academic path and its labor value, about 20% perceived the language as a threat to Namtrik.

Devaluation and weakness were other answers obtained from this question. Participants with Spanish dominance did show more favorable opinions towards Spanish. About 20% of the

participants said that communication and social exchange were some of the social advantages of speaking Spanish.

2.4 Geographical Positionality

Participants had a consensus when it came to what languages are spoken in Silvia and Popayán. 100% of the participants said that the city of Popayán is exclusively Spanish dominant. About 40% claimed that the town of Silvia has a mixture of Spanish and Namtrik. An interesting result was the emphasis made by about 60% of the participants that there is distinction between rural and urban settings within Silvia. Rural areas are predominantly related to Namtrik speakers, most specifically the Resguardo of Guambía. Whereas urban areas of Silvia would be a mixed linguistic setting. Nevertheless, when asked about the official language of Colombia, answers varied from Spanish being the official language to indigenous languages being official .

Section 3: Education Policy

3.1 Revitalization Initiatives

Participants were asked if they have knowledge of initiatives that benefited the revitalization process of Namtrik. The answers were mixed¹⁰, but the majority of the participants claimed that there were some initiatives that were active. Although, most of these initiatives come from inside the community, most of the time from the same Cabildo. One participant did claim that there was support from the National Ministry of Education. However, the younger participants claimed to know very little about the actual processes or materials available for language revitalization.

3.1 Language Teaching

¹⁰ It is important to remember that the majority of the participants were linked to the espiral de education.

Throughout the interview, the aspect of learning and teaching the language came up constantly. All the participants agreed on the necessity to teach younger generations their maternal language, about 70% claimed that this would have an effect on cultural traditions and their persistence as an ethnic group in Colombia. Those participants that did not speak the language or that were in the process of learning claimed that they would like to have access to classes directed towards adults, but that so far there are none available. All the answers that were given by the participants that had knowledge about language revitalization initiatives stated that they are mostly focused on children.

Self-categorized as non-indigenous

Section 1: Language Perceptions

1.1 Namtrik vs Spanish.

100% of the participants did not recognize the word Namtrik. Participants were more familiarized with the term *Guambiano* which makes allusion to the Resguardo of Guambía. As such, about 62% of the participants linked the language with the words, ethnicity, Guambía, Guambiano, indigenous, *Anaco*¹¹, and ancestry. 38% did not have an answer. Similar answers were found further into the interview when participants were asked about their knowledge about indigenous languages in Colombia. While the majority of the participants claimed not knowing much about indigenous languages, about 50% of the participants stated that indigenous languages “*son de ellos*” (are theirs). 100% of the participants did agree that there would be medicinal losses (referring to holistic medicine), to which most of the participants did seem to have great appreciation for.

¹¹ Traditional costume of the Misak community (Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 2018).

When asked about Spanish, 87.5% of the participants linked the language with colonization, conquest. About 37.5% of the responses included topics related to nationality, *Colombiano*, latin american or south america.

1.2 Languages in Colombia

100% of the participants identified Spanish as the official language of Colombia. About 37.5 % of the participants said indigenous languages. 1 participant identified *palenquero*¹² and another one identified English. When asked about specific regions within the Cauca department, 87.5% stated that the city of Popayán is exclusively Spanish dominant, one participant answered that the city has multicultural diversity.

Section 2: Education

2.1 Indigenous Languages

As mentioned above, the majority of the participants answered that they did not know much about indigenous languages, in general. However, 100% of the participants agreed that there is a gap within the educational system in Colombia. About 87.5% of the participants also stated that they would like to see more inclusion within the core curriculum of Colombia basic education. At the same time, about 62% of the participants recognized the historical importance of indigenous populations within the Colombian territory, and the relevance of the communities in the present. However, the remaining 38% stated that even when the culture is important, it is not relevant anymore.

¹² Creole language spoken in San Basilio de Palenque in the Atlantic coast of Colombia.

Discussion

In this section, we will explore and analyze the results yielded by the sociolinguistic interviews that took place in Silvia and Popayán, Cauca. These results will be discussed with the aim of determining the language attitudes that surround the Misak community within this region and answering the initial questions that led to this project. Followed by a comparison of the results found in Moreno Fernandez (2006) at the Tres Fronteras region.

1. What are the linguistic attitudes and perceptions of Namtrik in Silvia and Popayán?

Overall results do not explicitly show negative nor positive perspectives towards Namtrik within the Cauca department. In most instances results indicated lack of information and exposure to the Misak community from the participants in the city of Popayán. From the perspective of the Misak, Namtrik did represent a role of their own selves. In most instances the phrase “*lo propio*” was mentioned, indicating the relevance that language has for their social and individual identity.

“Si ya no hablamos o ya no entendemos... ya no sería nuestra identidad” - S-006. /

If we don't speak [Namtrik] or we don't understand ... it wouldn't be our identity.

Aguilar Cavallo (2006), mentions that oral tradition, from the perspective of an indigenous community, is the main path to transmit their traditions, and therefore maintain their identity. When asked about the possible losses, participants from Silvia mentioned the importance of their group identity. They also claimed that the importance of teaching

Namtrik to younger generations resided in the preservation of their culture, and their indigenous identity.

2. What are the linguistic attitudes and perceptions of Spanish in Silvia and Popayán?

Even when Spanish was recognized by the majority as the official language of Colombia, results indicated that it is seen as a language brought to the country. In many instances, both participants from Popayán and Silvia did refer to the conquest and the colonization period when referring to Spanish. An interesting aspect is the aggregated interpretation of thinking of Spanish as a nationality (*Colombiano*) or regionality indicator (*Suramericano, latinoamericano*). Both groups related Spanish to advantages related to educational opportunities and employability necessity, which correlates with the answers given when asked about the language experiences from the Misak community.

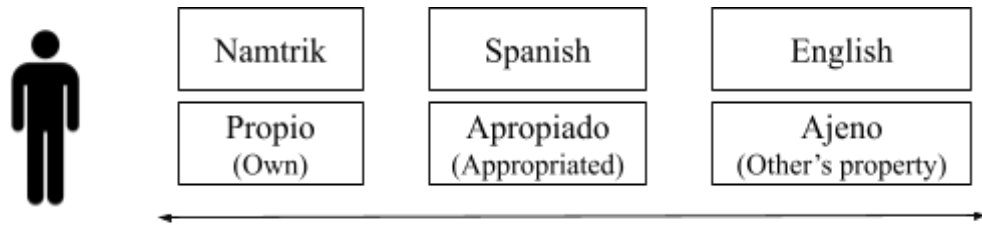
“Recuperar la memoria y recuperar la tierra, para recuperarlo todo” (AISO) /

Regain our memory and regain our land, to regain everything.

When it comes to Spanish, participants from Silvia, participant S-003 mentions that one of the biggest accomplishments from the Resguardo of Guambia was the demolition of the statue of Sebastian de Belalcazar in 2020. This event took place after a trial verdict found the conqueror guilty of genocide, dispossession and hoarding of lands (AISO, 2020). On Figure 4, we can observe the relationship that participant S-004 created when asked about his relation to Spanish. Further on, the participant commented on the positionality of English within this same space. This, because English has become an essential language for young professionals in Colombia (Ley General de Educación, 1994).

Figure 6

Relationality of language and belonging to a Misak individual.



3. Compare the attitudes and perceptions of codominant languages (Spanish-Portuguese) and dominant (Spanish)/ nondominant (Namtrik) languages.

Spanish & Portuguese:

So far, we have explored more in depth the responses from the participants. Now, it is important to understand the linguistic situation of a co-dominant linguistic space before making a comparison. Fernandez Moreno (2006), found that inhabitants of the region would make a differentiation when speaking on different sides of the border. When in Colombian and speaking with Colombians, participants would speak Spanish and when in Brazil and speaking with Brazilians, participants would speak in Portuguese. However, the author makes the distinction that this was not the case for every participant. In fact, he states that *portuñol*, or *portunhol* was also mentioned as a strategy of communication when the situation allowed it. Similar assertions were made by Ferreira Rodrigues (2020) and Chinellato Díaz (2021), which only reinforces the linguistic positionality of Spanish in Portuguese in this region. There was a general consensus that each territory had its own language, but that both languages were equally important given the border spaces that are shared and will continue to be shared.

Spanish & Namtrik:

The present study explored the different perceptions of language that existed in the Cauca department. Taking as sample the predominant indigenous community Misak and the city of Popayán. Even when results did not indicate negative perceptions towards Namtrik, the interviews indicated a social separation between these two communities. From Figure 4, we can observe that even when Spanish has been appropriated by the Misak community, its positionality is still further away than Namtrik's. Participants from Silvia had a strong sentiment towards the hierarchy that Namtrik has over Spanish. Now, excerpts from the interviews show a similar opinion towards the indigenous community.

“Por que habla [lengua] indigena, habla malo” (P-003)¹³ / Because she/he speaks indigenous [languages], she/he speaks bad

“Ellos hablan en lenguas” (P-004) / They speak in tongues¹⁴

“Hay personas que son racistas... que porque ellos visten su anaco o porque hablan muy diferente a nosotros, hay personas que tratan de ponerlos pequeñitos” (P-004) / There are people that are racists... that because they are dressed in their anaco or because they speak very differently to us, there are people that try to make them feel very small.

“En el Cauca son los blancos y los indígenas” (P-005) / In the Cauca there is the whites and the indigenous.

¹³ The participant was referring to general perceptions and comments heard from third parties.

¹⁴ Indigenous languages.

“Acá [en Popayán] no es muy relevante [el Namtrik]” (P-007)/ Here [in Popayán] it's not too relevant [Namtrik]

Again, results did not indicate explicit negative attitudes that are embedded in the payanés society. However, when looked through the lens of Social Identity Theory (Ramin & Yadollahi, 2014; Meyerhoff, 2011; Tajfel, 1971), we can clearly see the division between the “us” and “they”. Which as mentioned by Ramin & Yadollahi (2014) produces a discrepancy when it comes to hegemonic groups versus minority groups. As observed both on Morenos Fernandez (2006) and this current project, the sociolinguistic landscape of diverse languages will favor languages that can be represented by the powerful institutions.

However, there are still some ideals that potentially have an effect on how the members of the Misak community see themselves. Participant S-005 stated “Los indígenas que no hablan [una lengua nativa]... no... solo son palabras, no son indígenas” (The indigenous people that don’t speak [a native language]... are not... are just words, they are not indigenous). Similarly, S-006 and S-007 expressed feeling left out, because they were never exposed to Namtrik as a child, and as adults still struggle with it. S-010 also mentioned being the center of mockery when he first went to school and other children spoke Namtrik. Once again, we can bring the ideas of Tajfel and identify this clear distinction between “us” and “them”. The identity conflict that comes when an individual is not identical to other members of the community.

Bilingualism and Identity

It was mentioned in earlier sections that identity could also be a hybrid. Papastergiadis (1997) mentions: “Hybridity is the process by which the colonial governing authority undertakes to translate the identity of the colonized... but then fails producing something familiar, but new”. We can think of this hybridity as the mixture of cultural, linguistic and social aspects, which by any means tries to overtake the other one, but coexists in the same time and space. As it was identified in Moreno Fernandez (2006), bilingualism is an essential part of the identity of social groups that share geographical spaces. If we take a step back and look at the BLP scores (Appendix B), we can observe variance in language dominance. Even when a vast majority of the participants did indicate Spanish dominance, the results also showed that a high portion have a more neutral bilingualism. Which allows us to think about the role of Spanish within the identities of the bilingual individuals, and furthermore the type of *new* aspects this duality has created.

Institutional Power

Education, employment and social connections were a constant referent when speaking about the role of Spanish for the Misak community. As such, many of the participants indicated that even when they are Misak, Spanish is a necessity for them, given the institutional power the language holds. Brauman & Briggs (1990) mentions that access, legitimacy, competence and values are the factors that centralize authority. Similarly, Meyer (1977) states that the educational institutions are allocation agencies, and as such hold strong influence and impact on society.

. When asked about educational initiatives to expand the usage of Namtrik, participants from Silvia claimed to know that the cabildo had multiple initiatives to preserve the language, like books, songs, short stories, etc. Most of the current materials available have been created through the efforts of the Resguardo of Guambia (Astaiza Suarez, 2021), when asked if there was involvement from any other entity in Colombia, participants denied the statement. When researching more information, the law 1381 from 2010, which explicitly creates and guarantees the linguistic rights of the indigenous territories in Colombia, as well as the educational resources needed. However, when the participants from Popayán were asked about any type of revitalization initiatives they might know about, the answers were negative. In two instances the answer referred to academic research, similar to the present project.

As a consequence to what was mentioned above, we can distinguish the gap that exists when it comes to support of minority languages, at least in the city of Popayán. Participants commented on the possible shifting strategies for this process, in which historical exposure from early educational stages was suggested. Aguilar Cavallo (2006) suggests that the implementation of indigenous history, traditions and culture as part of the social sciences is perceived as one of the possible initiatives that can benefit indigenous communities and the preservation of native languages. Furthermore, the preservation of the most universal tradition shared by the inhabitants of Cauca, *la yerberia*. The holistic and ancestral power of medicinal plants is an embedded tradition in this region, and it was recognized by the participants as the biggest loss that could affect the population.

We have discussed the different language attitudes and perspectives that exist in Popayán and concluded that there was no direct evidence of negative attitudes towards Namtrik, as a language. While this might be true, when analyzing some of the comments made by the participants there is an indication that there might be more behind the positionality of the Misak community within the department. Participant S-010 stated that: “Muchas veces hablan fechorías... fuera de la comunidad” (Often times they speak misdeeds... outside the community). similarly, participant P-003 said: “Acá [Popayán]... cuando las personas tratan, no a la lengua sino al indigena... hablan de manera peyorativa”(Here... when people treat, not the language but the indigenous person... they speak in a pejorative way), and some of the already mentioned excerpts extracted from the interviews. Unfortunately, this project was not focused on the general perspectives of the community, and there is not enough conclusive data to answer this question.

Limitations

One of the main limitations of this project is that the sample size was very small, when compared to the total population of the Resguardo of Guambía. At the same time, this project was focused on the Misak community, which by any means represents the totality of diversity that exists in Cauca, much less the diversity of Colombia. Therefore, there is still much more field to explore and compare when it comes to language attitudes and perceptions towards indigenous communities and its *cabildos*.

Due to the reduced amount of time spent at the Resguardo, this data collection was performed at the Espiral de Educación. For the parameters of this project it means that the participants were related to the educational programs of the Resguardo. As such, their responses might be biased and can vary from the population that is not actively involved with the educational programs. At the same time, I, the researcher, was a foreign individual to this community in particular. However, the participants were aware that the answers given were going to be separated from any identifiable data provided. It is recommended for future projects to look at different sectors of the Misak community or well other communities in Colombia.

Conclusions

Linguistic identity has a key role within the social identity of an individual and its social relationships. This project has explored the perceptions of Namtrik in the city of Popayán and the town of Silvia.. Through the implementation of a sociolinguistic interview, this study was able to unveil the general perspectives towards the language Namtrik and the indigenous community Misak. Overall results do not indicate negative perspectives towards the language, and suggest a strong relationship between language and indigenous identity. The role of bilingualism for the members of this group and the role of institutional power within the educational field inside and outside the Resguardo of Guambia.

As initially predicted and according to previous literature, minority languages are often given a lower position when compared to majority languages. This could be largely due to the hegemonic power of said majority languages. However, this study also brought to attention the essential role of language to social identity of said minority groups and the cultural relevance when it comes to shared or borrowed traditions.

This study serves as an initial approach to the exploration of the social role of one of the biggest indigenous communities in Cauca, Colombia. At the same time, it opens a window for future research that involves linguistic rights, language planning or language education. And it also calls the reader's attention to critically observe the positionality of languages, both majority and minority, within their own communities.

Appendix A

Entrevista sociolingüística: comunidad Misak.

Sección 1: Lenguas y experiencias del participante.

1. Por favor, describase en unas pocas palabras.
2. Por favor, cuénteme un poco sobre su experiencia con el namtrik. Ahora, con el español.
3. Piense en algunas palabras que usted relaciona con el namtrik y algunas que usted conectaría con el español.
4. ¿Qué lenguaje(s) usa cuando habla con su familia?
5. ¿Qué lenguaje(s) usa cuando habla con sus amigos?
6. ¿Qué lenguaje(s) considera usted es/son el/los oficial(es) en Colombia?
7. Cuando piensa en Guambia, ¿Qué lenguaje(s) se hablan? ¿Y en Popayán/Piendamó/Silvia?

Sección 2: Lenguas indígenas.

1. ¿Qué ventajas percibe cuando habla namtrik?
2. ¿Qué sabe usted sobre las lenguas indígenas en general (incluyendo algunas de otras comunidades)?
 - a. Propuestas educativas, propuestas sociales, espacios comunitarios.
3. ¿Considera que el namtrik es la lengua oficial del cabildo? ¿Por qué?

4. ¿Cree que el namtrik (o otras lenguas indígenas) puede ser enseñado fuera del cabildo? ¿Por qué?
5. ¿Cree usted que hay suficientes iniciativas para preservar el namtrik en el Cauca? ¿Quien(es) impulsa esas iniciativas?
6. ¿Cree que es importante enseñar namtrik a las generaciones jóvenes? ¿Por qué?
7. ¿Cree usted que el namtrik tiene un papel en su identidad individual? ¿De qué manera?

Sección 3: Lenguaje español

1. ¿Qué ventajas percibe cuando habla en español?
2. ¿Debería el español ser enseñado dentro del cabildo? ¿Por qué?
3. ¿Considera usted que el español tiene un papel en su identidad individual? ¿De qué manera?
4. ¿Considera usted que hay un valor social (ante situaciones de competencia laboral/educativa/comunicativa, etc) a las lenguas indígenas cuando se compara con lenguas no indígenas? ¿De qué manera?

Background Information

1. ID del participante / Participant ID: _____
2. Edad / Age: _____
3. Lugar de residencia / Place of residency: _____
4. Nivel académico más alto cursado / Highest academic degree:
 - Menos que bachillerato / Less than High School.
 - Bachillerato / High School diploma or equivalent.
 - Un poco de universidad / Some college.
 - Universidad (Licenciatura, diplomado, etc) / College (B.A., B.S., etc.)
 - Algo de postgrado / /Some graduate school.
 - Maestría / Master 's degree.
 - Doctorado / PhD.
 - Otro / Other : _____

Entrevista sociolingüística: comunidad no indígena

Sección 1: Experiencias y lenguajes del participante

1. Por favor, describase en pocas palabras.
2. Piensa en algunas palabras que usted conecte con el namtrik, y algunas que conecte con el español.
3. ¿Qué lenguaje es el oficial en Colombia?
4. Cuando piensa en Silvia, ¿qué lengua(s) se hablan? ¿Y en Popayán?

Sección 2: Lenguas indígenas.

1. ¿Qué sabe sobre las lenguas indígenas en general?
2. ¿Deberían ser las lenguas indígenas enseñadas fuera de los cabildos? ¿Por qué?
3. ¿Cree que hay suficientes iniciativas para preservar las lenguas indígenas en el Cauca? ¿Quién(es) impulsan estas iniciativas?
4. ¿Es importante enseñar las lenguas indígenas a generaciones jóvenes? ¿Por qué?
5. ¿Cuáles son algunas palabras que usted relaciona con las lenguas indígenas?
6. ¿Piensa que debería existir más información sobre las lenguas indígenas? ¿Por qué?
7. ¿Debería el sistema nacional educativo incluir más sobre las lenguas indígenas/nativas dentro del curriculum obligatorio?

Sección 3: Lenguaje español.

1. ¿Qué ventajas percibe cuando habla en español?
2. ¿Cuáles son algunas palabras con las que conectaría con el español?
3. ¿Cree que hay un valor social añadido a las lenguas indígenas versus las no indígenas? ¿Por qué?
4. ¿Si usted tuviese la oportunidad, le gustaría aprender una lengua indígena/ nativa?
5. ¿Cree que puede existir una pérdida (cultural, tradicional, medicinal, etc) si ya no existiesen las lenguas indígenas en Colombia? (¿Si todos son monolingües?)
6. ¿Podría una lengua indígena ser una fortaleza dentro de una carrera profesional?
¿Por qué?

Appendix B

<i>Participant ID</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>Namtrik</i>	<i>Dominance</i>
S-001	29	103.244	195.054	-91.81
S-002	40	150.014	147.83	2.184
S-003	38	121.048	174.072	-53.024
S-004	47	96.524	197.052	-100.528
S-005	43	92.442	169.99	-77.548
S-006	42	197.872	66.83	131.042
S-007	33	201.596	50.848	150.748
S-008	18	191.698	123.488	68.21
S-009	21	147.744	136.026	11.718
S-010	27	179.89	140.2	39.69

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