

Saving Wapishana

Evaluating the chances for revitalization of an
endangered language



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Datum: juni 2015
Woordentelling: 12,722

Abstract

This thesis discusses the phenomena of language endangerment, language maintenance and language revitalization, applied to the case of the Wapishana in northern Brazil. It attempts to shine a light on theoretical discussions on the viability and challenges of language maintenance and revitalization by applying the existing theory on this phenomenon to a specific case of a threatened language.

The central aim of this thesis is to evaluate the chance Wapishana has to remain a spoken language in the future, and the viability of the language revitalization efforts that are being undertaken in Roraima, the region where Wapishana is still spoken. To this end the state of endangerment of Wapishana is reassessed, and the causes for its endangerment identified. Then the revitalization strategies that are being employed in Roraima are being evaluated to find out what their influences are on language attitude and behaviour among the Wapishana.

The conclusions that can be taken from this research are that even though Wapishana is still 'definitely endangered' as a result of continued oppression and historically bad socio-political circumstances, changes have been made for the better. Current revitalization strategies have positively influenced language attitude and behaviour among the Wapishana. Still the future of Wapishana, a language now spoken by less than 10.000 people, remains unsure. Socio-political circumstances have improved considerably, but it remains to be seen if these changes have been enough.

Table of contents

Abstract	3
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	6
<i>1.1. Endangered languages and their saviours.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>1.2. The Wapishana language and people.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>1.3. Organizational overview of the paper</i>	<i>9</i>
1.3.1. Research questions	9
1.3.2. Finding answers.....	9
Chapter 2: Theoretical considerations	11
<i>2.1. Language death and language endangerment.....</i>	<i>11</i>
2.1.1. Definitions of language death and language endangerment.....	11
2.1.2. Causes of language death and language endangerment	12
<i>2.2. Classifications of language endangerment</i>	<i>13</i>
2.2.1. Scales of endangerment.....	14
2.2.2. Stages of revitalization.....	14
2.2.3. Databases of language endangerment and their classifications	15
<i>2.3. The value of a language to its people.....</i>	<i>18</i>
2.3.1. Ancestors, communities and rights	18
2.3.2. Critiques of language revitalization.....	19
<i>2.4. Language revitalization strategies</i>	<i>19</i>
2.4.1. Immersion, bilingualism and neighbourhood	20
Chapter 3: Case study: The Wapishana of Roraima	21
<i>3.1. How endangered is Wapishana?.....</i>	<i>21</i>
3.1.1. Absolute and relative numbers of speakers	21
3.1.2. Transmission of Wapishana over generations	22
3.1.3. Domains and functions of Wapishana	22
3.1.4. Standardization and literacy in Wapishana	23
3.1.5. Evaluating the classification of endangerment of Wapishana	23
<i>3.2. Causes of the endangerment of Wapishana</i>	<i>26</i>
3.2.1. Geography and demography	26
3.2.2. Sociology, politics and education	26

3.3. Recent developments	27
3.3.1. <i>Recent developments in political activism and acknowledgement of indigenous rights</i>	27
3.3.2. <i>An evaluation of revitalization efforts in Roraima</i>	28
3.4. Language attitude and behaviour of the Wapishana	29
Chapter 4: Discussion and Conclusion	31
4.1. <i>Critiques of language revitalization literature</i>	31
4.2. <i>Is there a chance for Wapishana?</i>	32
4.4. <i>Aknowledgements</i>	32
Bibliography	34

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Endangered languages and their saviours

All over the world minority languages are threatened with extinction. Of the circa 6,000 languages that are spoken on earth today, between 600 and 3,000 will still be spoken in the year of 2100, depending on which estimate is followed (Thomason, 2001, pp. 241-242). In Brazil, at the time of the first Portuguese occupation in 1500, around 1,078 languages were spoken, 170 of which remain alive today (Oliveira, 2002, p. 83). Despite these bleak statistics, people the world over put time and effort into maintaining, or even reviving their mother tongue (Tsunoda, 2006, p. 134). One such effort for maintenance and revitalization is taking place in indigenous Wapishana communities in Roraima, in the extreme north of Brazil. Indigenous teachers have created a standardized orthography for the Wapishana language (Franchetto, 2008) and have worked towards incorporating the language in the curriculum of local schools (Rabelo, 2005; Santos L. P., 2014).

Within the academic discipline of linguistics various arguments have been made to come to the aid of endangered languages, to ensure linguistic diversity and to safeguard the linguistic heritage of minority populations. Linguists have acted upon these argumentations by documenting endangered languages, using research results to benefit the revitalization of these languages. This has been done by providing grammars of endangered languages and by helping to create teaching materials, so that the language can be learned again (Tsunoda, 2006, pp. 224-227). However, the utility and viability of language maintenance, and the importance of the mother tongue in identity formation, are subject of arduous debates within the academic arena, built on insights provided by specific case studies. It is from these debates and studies that I take the different theories and insights that underpin this case study, and it is to these theories that I hope to make a valuable contribution

Miyaoka (2001, p. 9; cited in Tsunoda, 2006, p. 161) states that “the disappearance of any language represents a loss of intellectual heritage not only for the people but for humanity as a whole”. Perhaps an even more compelling argument is the pattern of cultural and linguistic domination, in which minority languages and cultures are overwhelmed by dominant languages and cultures (Hale, et al., 1992, p. 1). The precarious situation that Wapishana and many other languages find themselves in, and the direct influence that language death, language maintenance and language policies have on the lives of so many people, pre-eminently make researching this phenomenon an enterprise that is socially relevant. An understanding of the situation of the Wapishana people and their language, however exotic they both may sound, indirectly enhances our understanding of minorities and their languages elsewhere in the world.

Now does a language like Wapishana have a chance to remain a spoken language in the future, or is it moribund and is saving it a hopeless cause? The bigger question behind this one is whether projects of language maintenance and revitalization at all provide enough of a future perspective to render them viable. Both these questions have a central place in this research, with special attention for the use of education to maintain languages that are threatened as a result of an asymmetrically bilingual society.

1.2. The Wapishana language and people

The central case of this paper will be the Wapishana language, currently spoken by around 44 percent of roughly 10.572 Wapishana living in Roraima, Brazil (IBGE, 2010). The language is a member of the Maipurean language family. In Roraima it is surrounded by Carib

languages (Figure 1). Other languages of the Maipurean Language family are spoken throughout northern South America and the Caribbean (Hammarström, Forkel, Haspelmath, & Bank, 2015). Wapishana itself is also spoken in the neighbouring region of Upper Takutu - Upper Essequibo in Co-operative Republic of Guyana (Figure 2).

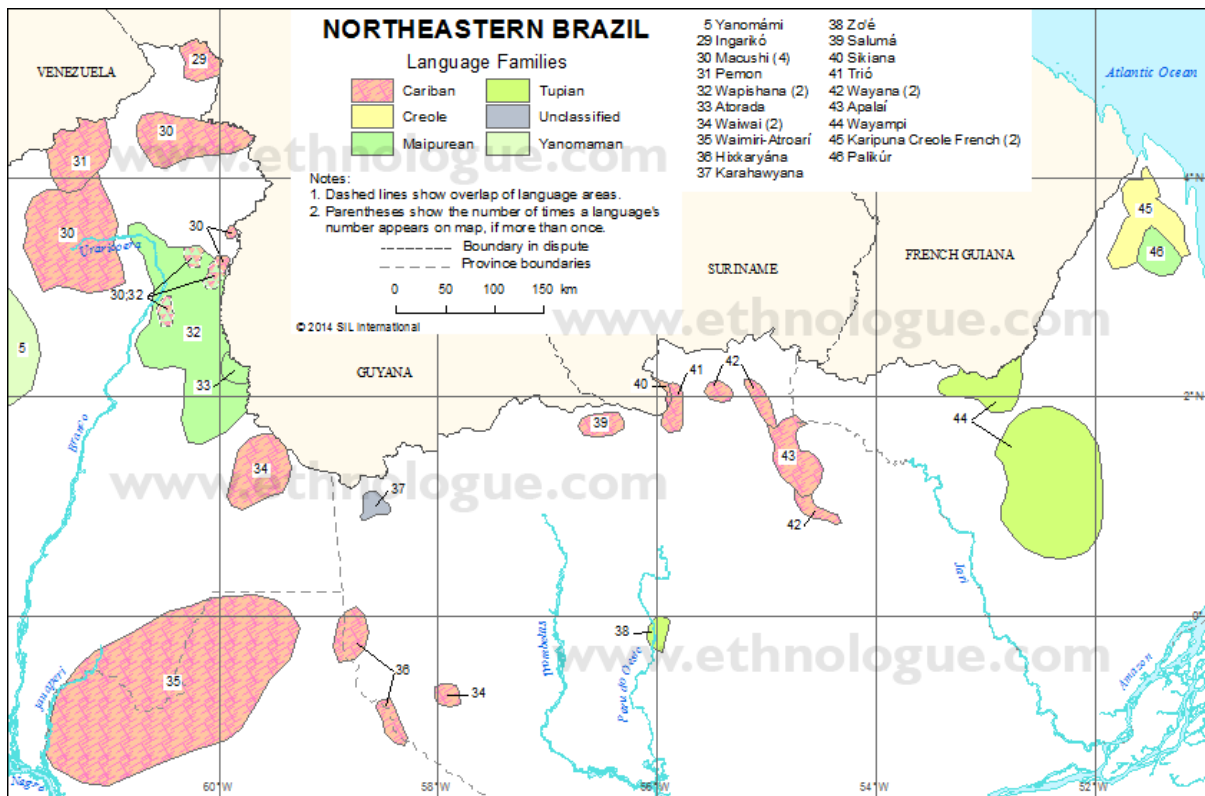


Figure 1 - Indigenous languages of northeastern Brazil (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2015)

Orthographies of Wapishana have been put forward by different missionary organizations. The language was standardized during the second half of the 20th century by indigenous teachers with the help of linguists (Franchetto, 2008). It is now a co-official language of the municipality of Bonfim (Pontes, 2015).

The Wapishana in Brazil are not ethnically distinct from those in Guyana, nor are there notable linguistic differences. The border that lies between the two halves of the Wapishana society has been imposed from above. This division has since had a great impact on the lives of those who ended up in different countries however, as it determined which government they had to deal with and which national language they were pressured to acquire (Franchetto, 2008, p. 45). Due to the limitations of time and space, the focus of this paper will be on the Wapishana people in indigenous territories in Serra da Lua in Roraima, Brazil (Figure 2), and their struggle to revitalize their language. Still, the continuity of the Wapishana society beyond the border will be kept in mind for some considerations.

Rabelo notes the difficulties in obtaining demographic data on indigenous people and clarifies that different institutions, like ISA, the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) come out with different estimates of the amount of indigenous people in Roraima and elsewhere (Rabelo, 2005, p. 27). The statistical data that will be referenced in this paper are those of the IBGE, this being the most

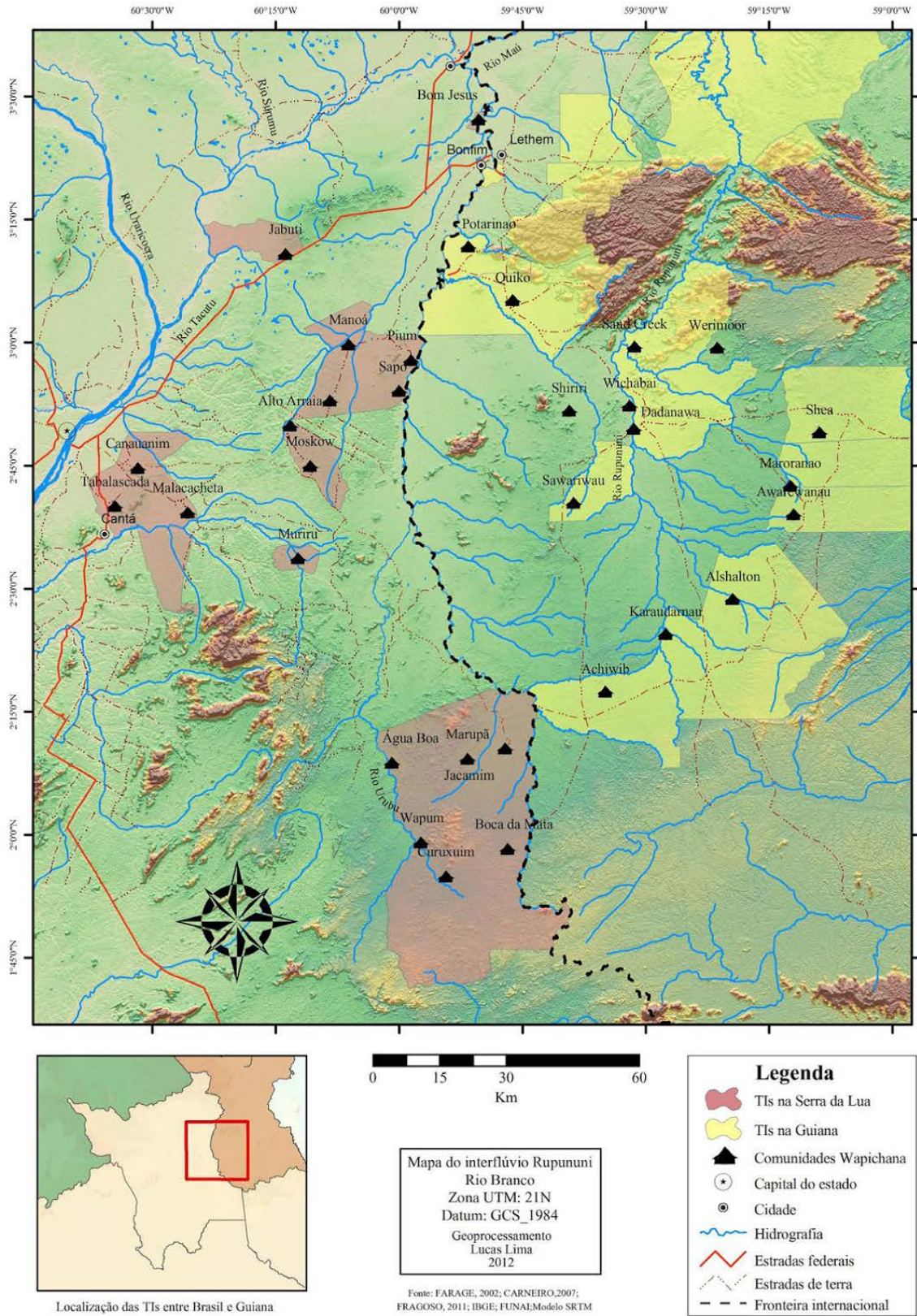


Figure 2 – Map of Wapishana settlements in Roraima and Guyana (Lima, 2012)

recent and most precise of all demographic censuses to be found. Absolute and relative numbers of Wapishana speakers will be discussed in more detail in 3.1.1..

Different sources state different opinions on the state of danger that Wapishana is in. Classifications range from 'vulnerable' (ILIT, 2015) to 'definitely endangered' (UNESCO, 2015). One of the goals of this research will be to evaluate the level of endangerment Wapishana is really in.

1.3. Organizational overview of the paper

The questions that I will try to answer in this paper are about the chance Wapishana has to remain a spoken language in the future, and the viability of the language revitalization efforts that are being undertaken in Roraima. In this section I will present the main research question and smaller questions that will help answer this question. I will also lay out the structure of the paper, indicating where the answers to what questions will be given.

1.3.1. Research questions

The main question that I will try to answer in this paper is: *What future perspective does the present situation in Roraima regarding language revitalization and education offer for the survival of Wapishana?* In order to find an answer to this question, the following sub-questions need answering first:

1. *What state of endangerment is Wapishana in, and has this changed over the last decades?*
2. *What factors play a role in the endangerment and revitalization of Wapishana?*
 - a. *Which factors have caused the present situation of Wapishana?*
 - b. *What recent changes can be seen regarding those factors?*
3. *To what extent are the current strategies for maintenance and revitalization successful?*
 - a. *What strategies for revitalization are currently being employed in Serra da Lua?*
 - b. *How do current strategies for revitalization influence the attitude of the Wapishana towards their language?*
 - c. *How do current strategies for revitalization influence the language behaviour of the Wapishana?*

1.3.2. Finding answers

To answer the first sub-question the classification of Wapishana on different scales of endangerment will be evaluated. In 2.2. The most important classification models will be explained in more detail. In 3.1. I will evaluate the classifications of Wapishana by Ethnologue (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2015), Multitree (ILIT, 2015), the ALD (2015) and UNESCO (2015). I will then consider a broad variety of local academic and official sources to see if I can come to a new, more solidly based classification using the *Language Vitality Index* (LVI) (UNESCO A. H., 2003) and the stages of *Reverse Language Shift* (RLS) (Fishman, 2006).

For an answer to the second question, I will first go through theoretical work on language death and endangerment provided by David Crystal (2014), Sarah G. Thomason (2001), Tasaku Tsunoda (2006), Suzanne Romaine (2010), and Donald Winford (2003) in 2.1., in order to identify the factors that tend to play major roles in language endangerment. To then get an idea of the specific factors that have been at play in the specific situation of Roraima I will consult a variety of sources that deal with geographic, demographic, social and political circumstances in the Portuguese Empire and the Brazil before 1985 in 3.2.1. and 3.2.2..

Moving on to the present situation in 3.3., I will consult sources that deal with the attainment of indigenous rights in the Brazilian constitution, and with activism on the part

of teachers and the Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR). I will also investigate contemporary headlines on news websites about this subject in Roraima, to get an idea of the most recent developments. In 3.3.2. the implication and the successes and failures of indigenous education in Roraima will be discussed. To make sense of the resulting information on Wapishana education, I will compare it to theoretical work on the revitalization of endangered languages and the strategies that may be the most likely to achieve this. These strategies are described in detail by Tsunoda (2006) and Fishman (2006), aided by additional remarks from Stephen A. Wurm (2002) and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (2010). This theoretical groundwork will be elaborated on in 2.5.. In 3.4. I will reflect on the language attitude and behaviour that resulted from the circumstances mentioned in 3.2. and 3.3.. to see if an answer to questions 3.b. and 3.c. can be found.

In the discussion in 4.1. there will be a place for critiques of language revitalization and endangerment on the basis of the information that has come forth in the research for this paper. The limitations of our knowledge of the future will be taken into account here, as well as the difficulties in assessing the thoughts and actions of an entire group of people. In the subsequent sections, to bring the paper to a close, an answer will be given to the main research question in the form of an indication of the chances there are for Wapishana in the future. Some recommendations will also be given as to what steps may be taken to better secure the future of Wapishana.

Chapter 2: Theoretical considerations

In this chapter I will introduce the theoretical underpinnings of this paper. The main causes of language endangerment and death, the classification systems that are used to categorize languages according to their degree of endangerment, the value of linguistic heritage, and the different strategies that may be employed in attempts to maintain and revitalize endangered languages, will be discussed. Going through these four theoretical areas, this chapter will provide the concepts and definitions with which will be worked throughout this paper.

2.1. Language death and language endangerment

2.1.1. Definitions of language death and language endangerment

Two central concepts in this study are language death and language endangerment. These closely related phenomena have been extensively studied within linguistics. When talking about a language being dead, linguists generally mean that nobody alive still has active command of the language. Although the exact definition of language death is a subject of vivid discussions, I will stick here with David Crystal, who puts it as simple as “A language dies when nobody speaks it anymore.” (2014, p. 1). Language endangerment is even harder to pinpoint. One could define it as a situation in which the existence of a language in the future is being threatened, mostly due to asymmetrical contact with another language. According to Tsunoda “language endangerment is a matter of degree” (2006, p. 9), and what we should be talking about is the degree of endangerment of a language along a continuum that reaches from full strength and vivacity to the state of death (p. 9). Classifications of different degrees of language endangerment will be discussed in 2.2.. The rest of this section will focus on what language death and language endangerment are and what causes them.

Different languages, and even different varieties of the same language, are constantly competing with each other for dominance in a certain community. Sometimes these competitions or conflicts result in the demise of one of these languages. Linguists speak of two different types of language death, a sudden and a gradual variant. In case of a sudden death, for example as the consequence of a natural disaster or a massacre, the language dies while it is still intact (Romaine, Contact and Language Death, 2010, p. 322). In case of a gradual death, however, the dying language loses speakers, domains, functions and purposes over the course of multiple generations, with the home often being the last bastion

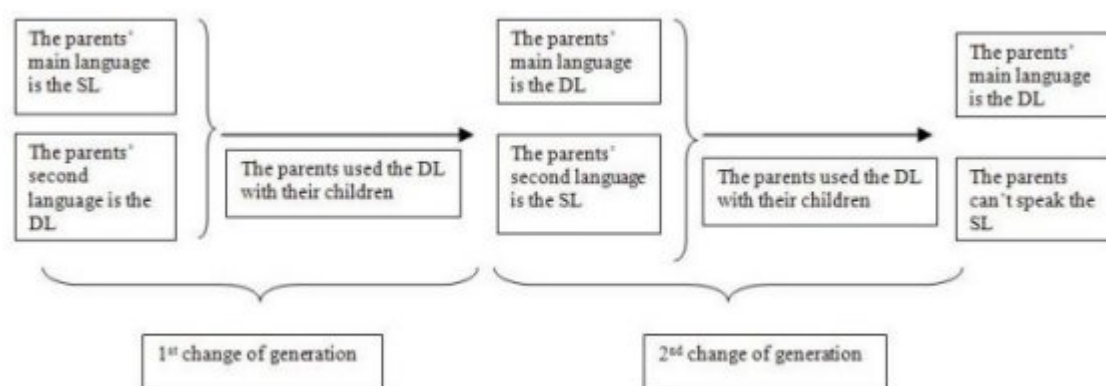


Figure 3 - Sasse's model of intergenerational language shift (1992)

of the native language (Romaine, 2006, p. 453). It is the gradual death of a language that is of our concern here.

Language shift is a term used when a group abandons their traditional language to adopt a more dominant language (Winford, 2003, p. 15). The standard pattern for gradual language death is an intergenerational language shift in which a first generation is monolingual in the minority language, a second generation is bilingual in the mother tongue and the national majority language, and in which a third generation is monolingual in the national language (Romaine, *Contact and Language Death*, 2010, p. 324). A similar pattern, but with two different bilingual generations, can be seen in figure 1, with DL meaning dominant language and SL meaning subordinate language. Gradual language death is accompanied by changes within the language. Crystal states that with a loss of domains comes “a loss of vocabulary, discourse patterns, and stylistic range” (2014, p. 110). Romaine notes a loss of lexicon concerned with traditional ways of life that are being given up, and of grammatical systems concerned with kinship and classification, among other changes. Yet none of the changes that constitute what we call language loss or attrition are uniquely related to language death. They may also occur without the language being endangered (pp. 326-329, 336). For this reason it is impossible to prove that a language is dying by looking at purely linguistic information.

2.1.2. Causes of language death and language endangerment

Hans-Jürgen Sasse, whose model of intergenerational language shift can be seen above, was also one of the first to put forward a theoretical model of language death in 1992. His model involved three interacting components: external setting, speech behaviour and structural consequences (Thomason, 2001, p. 225). About the interaction of the first two columns, Thomason says that the external setting, being “the uneven distribution of languages in a multilingual setting”, brings about a negative attitudes towards the minority language. These attitudes, in turn, “culminate in the decision to abandon that language” (p. 225). Thus, the external setting causes language attitudes, which then cause language behaviour. Annette Schmidt (1990) developed a cyclic model for language endangerment that causally links Sasse’s ‘structural consequences’, the deterioration of a language that falls out of use, back to language attitude as part of the ‘external setting’. According to this model, people who negatively evaluate their own linguistic abilities as a consequence of not using the language frequently enough, will develop a negative image of their language and start to speak it even less (cited in Tsunoda, 2006, p. 34).

Language behaviour in the form of language shift is the most easily visible cause of language death. The first prerequisite for such a shift is the presence of a dominant language to shift to. One cannot adopt a language that one doesn’t know (Thomason, 2001, p. 78). If a contact situation is established, the primary causes for this shift are, as Sasse’s model suggests, cultural, social, economic and military rather than linguistic. Ultimately, the death of a language is about people ceasing to speak it more than about internal changes within the language. As a language isn’t used public domains like school, government and economic life, it will cease to be used in the home as well, as parents will stop transmitting the language to their children (Romaine, *Contact and Language Death*, 2010, p. 320). The transmission of language to young children is a factor that is crucial to the survival of languages (Tsunoda, 2006, p. 9), and will therefore be one of the central issues of this paper.

The attitude that people have towards their language is perhaps the most important of all variables, being the main motivator behind linguistic behaviour (Bradley, 2002, p. 1). If people view their language as useful or important they will be less inclined to leave it for

another language. Many minority languages, however, are viewed by their own speakers as a symbol of underdevelopment, standing in the way of prosperity and social status (Crystal, 2014, p. 110). Parents often stop transmitting their mother tongue to their children because of a loss of pride, and to improve their children's economic opportunities later in life (Romaine, *Contact and Language Death*, 2010, p. 321). These attitudes are not absolutely predictable as they are the outcomes of a complex combination of circumstances (Thomason, 2001, p. 20), still political and social circumstances may serve as useful indicators for the attitude people may have towards their language.

As Nancy Dorian points out, "the search for a single cause which inevitably leads to language death is futile" (1981; cited in Crystal, 2014, p. 91). According to Thomason we can identify necessary, but not sufficient conditions for a change in language behaviour (2001, p. 85). Therefore we have to look for a combination of factors that play a role. Tsunoda (2006, pp. 58-63) has compiled a list of 15 possible causes for language endangerment, which is as follows:

1. *Dispossession of the land*
2. *Relocation of the people*
3. *Decline or loss of the population*
4. *Breakdown in isolation and proximity to towns*
5. *Dispersion of the population*
6. *Mixing of speakers of different languages*
7. *Socio-economic oppression, discrimination, exclusion from political participation*
8. *Low status/prestige of the group and its language*
9. *Negative language attitude*
10. *Assimilating language policy*
11. *Lack of literature and standardization*
12. *Social development*
13. *Destruction of the environment/habitat*
14. *Spread of religion*
15. *Culture contact and clash*

The different causes listed above work together towards the demise of a language. They don't need to all be present at the same time, and some of them are more primal than others, but it is in the interaction between them that languages lose ground. The causes combine geographic, demographic, sociological, linguistic, psychological, political and educational circumstances. Tsunoda may have added a negative language attitude to the list of causes, but the bottom line in accordance with Romaine's theory is that all the other causes influence the attitude that people have towards their language (Romaine, 2010, p. 336). A selection of the causes above will return in 3.2. in order to determine how the specific causes of the endangerment of Wapishana fit in.

2.2. Classifications of language endangerment

In the academic discourse on language endangerment and language maintenance and revitalization, different theories on gradations of endangerment and the position of language in communities have come forth. These classifications use criteria like the number of speakers, the age of mother tongue speakers, whether children still learn the language, and the functions that the language has in its community to determine the degree of danger that a language is facing (Tsunoda, 2006, p. 9). These factors combine some of the more visible circumstances seen in 2.1.2..

There is a variety of classifications by different authors. For the purpose of conciseness, three classifications will receive special attention here: those by Krauss (1992), Fishman (1991) and UNESCO (2003). Krauss' classification will be discussed because it is relatively detailed and deals with most of the criteria mentioned above, although its main concern is transmission of the language to children. This classification also seems to lie at the base of many further classifications like that of UNESCO. Fishman's classification is relevant because it takes the perspective of revitalization and is used as a theoretical basis for revitalization strategies. UNESCO's *Language Vitality Index* (LVI), used in the *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* (Moseley, 2010) is one of the most elaborate classification systems in use by online databases of endangered languages, and through its wide use seems to be a standard point of reference within the field, as far as there is one. The classification of the Ethnologue, another leading online database, will also shortly be reflected on.

2.2.1. Scales of endangerment

Krauss' classification, which is mainly concerned with the transmission of a language to children, is as follows (Tsunoda, 2006, p. 12, emphasis added):

- (a) **Safe languages:** *learned by children, and predicted to still be learned by the end of the century.*
- (b) **Endangered languages.**
 - 1. *Stable languages: still being learned by children, but less safe than (a).*
 - 2. *Languages in decline.*
 - i. *Instable and eroding: some of the children still speak the language.*
 - ii. *Definitely endangered: the youngest speakers are of the parental generation.*
 - iii. *Severely endangered: the youngest speakers are grandparents. Parents cannot teach the language to their children.*
 - iv. *Critically endangered: there are very few speakers left, and they are of the great-grandparental generation.*
- (c) **Extinct languages:** *no longer spoken or remembered by anyone. No new documentation of them can be obtained.*

This is one of a variety of classifications using similar terms, each focusing on a selection or combination of the criteria mentioned above. A broader selection of these classifications can be found in Tsunoda's *Language Endangerment and Language Revitalization* (2006).

2.2.2. Stages of revitalization

Joshua A. Fishman, a leading figure in the literature on language revitalization, describes eight stages of language revitalization in his *Reverse Language Shift* (RLS) theory (2006). Fishman's stages are specifically concerned with the functions of the language in society. His classification is as follows (Fishman, 2006, pp. 93-100):

- Stage 8:** *Speakers are isolated old folks. The language will have to be reconstructed from their speech and taught to adults.*
- Stage 7:** *There is an active community of speakers past child-bearing age. Younger generations need to be involved in order to save the language.*
- Stage 6:** *Intergenerational involvement is attained and the language is informally used within the family, the neighbourhood and community. As long as this stage is not attained and maintained, further stages will do little good.*
- Stage 5:** *Literacy in the home, school and community is achieved, formalising the use of the language. Hereby the language has attained a stable position on a small scale.*

Stage 4: *The language becomes part of the official curriculum for lower education in its communities.*

Stage 3: *The language is used in the lower work sphere outside of the community in interaction with people with other native languages.*

Stage 2: *The language is used in lower levels of government and local media.*

Stage 1: *Cultural autonomy is attained. There is some use of the language in higher education and in higher level occupation, government and media.*

The stages above take the situation that a language is in to indicate in what area the next steps can be taken on the road to full language vitality. Fishman has specific suggestions for each stage, but they come down to getting from one stage to the next. Fishman's RLS strategy in general thus entails working from the bottom up, through all the stages. In 3.1.5. I will attempt to determine what stage Wapishana is in. Important to note in advance is that a language is hardly ever in one stage at the time, as "life is always full of more complexities and irregularities than theory can provide for" (Fishman, 2006, p. 93). Romaine criticizes Fishman's theory for denying the positive effects of some top-down strategies. She quotes McConvell pointing out that power in institutions may increase possibilities for use of a language in other domains as well (1992, cited in Romaine, S., 2006, p. 452).

2.2.3. *Databases of language endangerment and their classifications*

A variety of online databases exist that focus on endangered languages. Their systems of classification are generally based on similar principles as the two types of classifications mentioned above, drawing from the same theoretical background. The systems of two prominent databases, UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* (Moseley, 2010) and the *Ethnologue* (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2015), will be discussed in this subsection, with a focus on the first. The *Language Endangerment Index* (LEI) by the Alliance for Linguistic Diversity (ALD, 2015) will also be mentioned. UNESCO's *Language Vitality Index* (LVI, Table 1) will be applied to Wapishana in 3.1.5. (Table 2b) to identify a possible change in endangerment over the last decades. There, the classification of the language in the *Ethnologue* will also be reconsidered.

The *Ethnologue* uses the EGIDS scale, that encompasses 13 levels from international to extinct, employing transmission and age of speakers as well as the function of the language (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2015). This results in a combination of elements of Krauss' and Fishman's classifications.

UNESCO's LVI was created by a group of experts on language endangerment from all over the world, including Micheal Krauss himself. Tasaku Tsunoda, Bruna Franchetto and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, whose work is cited in this paper, have also contributed to the creation of the LVI by taking part in working symposiums and commenting on earlier versions (UNESCO A. H., 2003, p. 24). The LVI is a scale that resembles Krauss', with six degrees of endangerment. Classification happens on the basis of nine factors (Table 1). The LVI considers the first six factors central to determining the degree of endangerment, and then the next three to determining the chances to improve the endangerment situation. Together, according to the LVI, "these nine factors are especially useful for characterizing a language's overall sociolinguistic situation" (p. 7). Note that one of the factors, 'absolute number of speakers' is not part of Table 1, as the creators of the LVI feel it is not possible to make a strict division along a scale of endangerment on the basis of this factor (p. 8). However, Krauss has argued that only languages with over 100.000 speakers are safe (Romaine, 2006, p. 442)

Degree of endangerment	0. Extinct	1. Critically endangered	2. Severely endangered	3. Definitely endangered	4. Unsafe	5. Safe
a. Intergenerational Language Transmission	There are no speakers.	The language is used by very few speakers, mostly of great-grandparental generation.	The language is used mostly by the grandparental generation and up.	The language is used mostly by the parental generation and up.	The language is used by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains.	The language is used by all ages, from children up.
c. Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population	None speak the language.	Very few speak the language.	A minority speak the language.	A majority speak the language.	Nearly all speak the language.	All speak the language.
d. Domains and Functions	The language is not used in any domain for any function.	The language is used only in a very restricted number of domains and for very few functions.	The language is used in limited social domains and for several functions.	The language is used in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains.	Two or more languages may be used in most social domains and for most functions.	The language is used in all domains and for all functions.
e. Response to New Domains and Media	The language is not used in any new domains.	The language is used only in a few new domains.	The language is used in some new domains.	The language is used in many new domains.	The language is used in most new domains.	The language is used in all new domains.
f. Availability of Written Materials	No orthography is available to the community.	A practical orthography is known to the community and some material is being written.	Written materials exist, but they may only be useful for some members of the community; for others, they may have a symbolic significance. Literacy education in the	Written materials exist and children may be exposed to the written form at school. Literacy is not promoted through print media.	Written materials exist, and at school, children are developing literacy in the language. Writing in the language is not used in administration.	There is an established orthography and a literacy tradition with grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature and everyday media. Writing in the

			language is not a part of the school curriculum.			language is used in administration and education.
g. Official Attitudes towards Language	Minority languages are prohibited.	The dominant language is the sole official language, while non-dominant languages are neither recognized nor protected.	Government encourages assimilation to the dominant language. There is no protection for minority languages.	No explicit policy exists for minority languages; the dominant language prevails in the public domain.	Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of private domains. The use of the language is prestigious	All languages are protected.
h. Community Members' Attitudes towards Language	No one cares if the language is lost; all prefer to use a dominant language.	Only a few members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.	Some members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.	Many members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.	Most members support language maintenance.	All members value their language and wish to see it promoted.
i. Type and Quality of Documentation	No material exists.	There are only a few grammatical sketches, short word-lists and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality or are completely un-annotated.	There are some grammatical sketches, word-lists and texts useful for limited linguistic research but with inadequate coverage. Audio and video recordings of varying quality, with or without any annotation, may exist.	There may be an adequate grammar or sufficient numbers of grammars, dictionaries and texts but no everyday media; audio and video recordings of varying quality or degree of annotation may exist.	There is one good grammar and a number of adequate grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature and occasionally updated everyday media; adequate annotated high-quality audio and video recordings exist	There are comprehensive grammars and dictionaries, extensive texts, and a constant flow of language materials. Abundant annotated highquality audio and video recordings exist.
Note: factor b. is missing from this table because the LVEF does not provide a gradation for this factor.						

The LVI does not provide a guide to calculating the degree once information on all factors has been found. It is the opinion of the creators of the framework that “[l]anguages cannot be assessed simply by the adding of numbers” (UNESCO A. H., 2003, p. 17) and advises against giving languages a single label. This appears to go against the practice seen in the *Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger* (Moseley, 2010), in which linguists, commissioned by the UNESCO, do assign languages a single degree of endangerment based on the LVI. This is done in order to indicate the state of language endangerment around the world. This counts as well for the *Ethnologue* and the *Language Endangerment Index* (LEI). For the purpose of detecting a development in the overall degree of endangerment of Wapishana, I too will make such a calculation, fully acknowledging the limited accuracy of a single number or word.

2.3. The value of a language to its people

Many people may welcome the disappearance of languages as they believe a monolingual world will provide easy communication, understanding and peace (Crystal, 2014, p. 35). There are also people who think that linguistic diversity is a source of unnecessary costs, as it requires translation (Pawley, 1991, cited in Tsunoda, 2006, p. 159), and in case of endangerment even more expensive revitalization efforts. A lively debate is going on between those who adhere these views, and those who advocate the revitalization and maintenance of the world’s endangered languages. Arguments brought forward by linguists in favour of language revitalization range from the importance of linguistic diversity (Crystal, 2014; Tsunoda, 2006) to the view that languages are repositories of human knowledge and humanity itself (Rodrigues, 2001), reflecting “a unique encapsulation and interpretation of human existence” (Crystal, 2014, p. 57). Due to the limitations of this paper, that deals with a specific community, I will focus here on the value that speaking a native language has for the people who speak it. What does losing a language mean for them, and why does preserving it matter?

2.3.1. Ancestors, communities and rights

Tsunoda answers this question with arguments that may be divided in two overarching themes, a connection to ancestral knowledge, culture and lands, and sources of identity, unity and self-esteem for the community. The first argument is about a connection to the past, but also about making sure that the past gets a place in the future. According to many indigenous minorities, language is something that provides a connection to their ancestors, and a spiritual connection to the land that they live in. It also conveys knowledge of that land and of the culture and traditions of the people, often tied closely together, for example in practices of traditional medicine (2006, pp. 136-139).

The second argument is about the connection between language and group-identity. According to Romaine, to preserve a language is to preserve its community (2006, p. 457). Language is seen as what binds the people who speak it together and determines who they are. Repression and stigmatization persisting from the colonial past has prompted the abandonment of indigenous languages, because people didn’t want to be identified with it anymore (Tsunoda, pp. 140-144). According to Kamwangamalu, who also links the survival of languages to the survival of their communities, educational systems continue to fail indigenous peoples, leaving them illiterate and withholding a chance for economic success from them (2005, cited in Hornberger, 2011, p. 1). The value of language revitalization in education may then be found in undoing this injustice, as formulated below:

“Language revitalization activities create a cultural climate where the people’s ethnic heritage is appreciated and respected and where publications on them are available to those interested. They in turn foster the people’s sense of pride, self-esteem, identity, and ethnicity, and they contribute to the attenuation of the negative attitude towards the language and to raising its profile.” (Tsunoda, 2006, p. 172)

Arguments for the preservation of endangered languages have been consolidated and given political meaning in the form of indigenous and linguistic human rights. Entering the academic and political discourse in the 1980’s, the idea of giving linguistic rights to indigenous minorities has resulted in several declarations. Some selected quotes from such declarations are included below:

“Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their [...] languages, oral traditions, [...] writing systems and literatures...”; “... All indigenous peoples [...] have [...] the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own language and culture.”; “States shall take effective measures to provide appropriate resources for these purposes.” (Draft Declaration of Indigenous Peoples, 1993, cited in May, 2008, p. 284)

“... the right to the use of one’s own language both in private and in public; ...”

“... the right for their own language and culture to be taught; ...”

“... the right to receive attention in their own language from government bodies and in socioeconomic relations.” (Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, 1996, cited in Tsunoda, 2006, p. 144)

2.3.2. Critiques of language revitalization

Kenan Malik has criticized language revitalization for being reactionary and for trying to fight modernity itself. He claims efforts for revitalization are unrealistic and nostalgic and that they exclude people from participation in the modern world (2000, cited in Romaine, 2006, p. 445). Tsunoda adds to this by asking: “If it is a right to maintain one’s traditional language, wouldn’t it also be a right to abandon it?” (2006, p. 160). Romaine agrees that the survival of what many see as an authentic indigenous culture depends on restoring a long gone past, rejecting everything that has happened since the start of colonialism (2006, p. 446). She argues instead for the renegotiating of “the various processes that have undermined languages” (p. 454) to proceed to a more equal future. Thus she puts forward an ideology for revitalization that looks into the future and aims to include people, and thereby seems resistant to Malik’s criticism. To Tsunoda’s remark above, one might answer that guaranteeing the rights cited in 2.3.1. provides a context in which a person can abandon a language out of free will rather than socio-political pressure.

2.4. Language revitalization strategies

There are many different kinds of activities being undertaken with the aim of maintaining and revitalizing languages. These activities vary greatly in their aims, their point of departure and their size. The generally accepted definition of language revitalization is that it is an activity that aims to “maintain or restore a language to such a state that it is spoken by a reasonable amount of people, reasonably fluently, and in a reasonably intact form” (Tsunoda, 2006, p. 171). This definition leaves a lot to the imagination, as it fails to specify what is meant by the word ‘reasonable’. What is a reasonable amount? An amount that

guarantees viability? If 100.000 people, the amount needed for a language to be viable according to the LEI (ALD, 2015), is taken as 'a reasonable amount, the Wapishana population, comprising less than 20.000 people in total, could never provide it.

The theories mentioned before are used to develop models of education and alternative revitalization strategies for endangered minority languages. In 2.4.1. I will discuss two revitalization strategies that are commonly employed in the revitalization and maintenance of languages that are still spoken to a certain extent by people in the community: the immersion method, the bilingual method, and the neighbourhood method. Then I will cite fishman's suggestions for different stages of RLS.

It should be noted that the factors that play a role in language revitalization are basically the same as those that play a role in endangerment, as revitalization is all about reversing the factors that caused endangerment in the first place. As will become clear below, revitalization strategies are mainly concerned with the task of teaching the language to those who have lost it. But as Nancy Hornberger acknowledges, "schools alone are not enough to do the job." (2011, p. 1). She points out that socioeconomic and political circumstances must also work in the favour of revitalization for it to be successful.

2.4.1. Immersion, bilingualism and neighbourhood

The first strategie Tsunoda discusses is that of immersion. This method entails creating a situation in mostly educational settings where children are fully surrounded by the language. The dominant national language is banned from these environments as a means of communication. This strategy has proven very successful in preschools, middle schools and camps in New Zealand with respect to the Maori language, and in Hawaii with respect to Hawaiian (Tsunoda, 2006, pp. 202-203). The bilingual method is similar, and mainly confined to schools. It entails the use of the minority language alongside the dominant language as a medium of education. Of this method there is a parallel model, which means both languages remain equally represented throughout the education, and a transitional model, where children are taught in their mother language in lower years, and then shift to the dominant language gradually. The last model seems more concerned with providing a good education, departing from the idea that attaining literacy is easier in the native language, than it is concerned with preserving the minority language as such (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2010).

The neighbourhood method can be seen as an extension of the immersion method, where immersion finds its way from schools to the family and the neighbourhood. To make this happen, a cohesive speech community needs to be created by a people moving to the same neighbourhood. This strategy has proven successful in a community in Northern Ireland, where children brought Gaelic home from school and helped the parents, who were not all fluent speakers anymore, to regain fluency as well (Tsunoda, pp. 203-204).

Language revitalization is often accompanied by cultural activities, because as Rob Amery states: "Language and culture are of course inseparable" (1994, cited in Tsunoda, 2006, p. 173). These activities may include singing, dancing, handcraft and collecting plants for traditional medicine. Apart from strengthening a cultural community, cultural activities also provide contexts where the use of the traditional language is natural (p. 173-174).

Chapter 3: Case study: The Wapishana of Roraima

Throughout the previous chapters I have discussed theories on language death, language endangerment, the value of languages to their communities, and strategies for language revitalization, I will move to apply these theories to the specific case of the Wapishana people in Roraima in this chapter. Surveying a broad variety of literature on national, regional and local circumstances in Brazil, I will try to provide answers to the sub-questions posed in 1.3.1..

3.1. *How endangered is Wapishana?*

The Ethnologue classifies Wapishana as ‘shifting’, meaning “The child-bearing generation can use the language among themselves, but it is not being transmitted to children” (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2015), based on information provided by Mily Crevels (2012). The online database Multitree places the language on the LVI as ‘vulnerable’ without providing a clear argumentation or sources (ILIT, 2015). UNESCO itself classifies Wapishana as ‘definitely endangered’ (Moseley, 2010), based on 2008 databank by Denny Moore (Moseley, 2010). The ALD, finally, says Wapishana is either ‘threatened’, based on Moseley (2007), or ‘vulnerable’, based on Crevels (2012), both with 20 percent certainty due to considering only the number of speakers (ALD, 2015). These classifications vary considerably. What they have in common is their lack of information, often basing themselves on little more than the amount of speakers. None of these databases directly cites Brazilian sources.

It is one of the aims of this paper to add to the available knowledge about the situation of Wapishana with insights from Brazilian academic literature and investigations, usually written in Portuguese, and therefore harder to access for the Anglophone academic society. Throughout the following subsections I will consider seven of the nine factors from UNESCO’s LVI with respect to the Wapishana, in order to come to a new calculation of Wapishana’s degree of endangerment in 3.1.5. The degree of endangerment during the 1980’s and now will be calculated. The 1980’s are a turning point because with the end of the military regime, Brazil saw the first acknowledgement of indigenous rights in the Federal Constitution (Santos L. P., 2014, p. 276). More will be said about this turning point in 3.2.3..

This calculation will be made by applying the LVI to the Wapishana for as far as information can be found in Table 2b. The official and communal attitudes to the language will be discussed in 3.2.. The conclusions of their assessment will be added to Table 2b as well. The information discussed below will then also be used to indicate the position of Wapishana in Fishman’s stages of RLS.

3.1.1. *Absolute and relative numbers of speakers*

When it comes to numbers of speakers of Wapishana, secondary sources often suggest this is the same number as the size of the ethnic group. However, the Insikiran Centre for Indigenous Education (NIFI) estimated that around 40 percent of the Wapishana people still spoke the indigenous language in 2003 (Santos M. G., 2006, p. 20). According to Crevels, around 4.000 of 7.000 Wapishana, 57 percent, still speak the language based on sources between 2006 and 2009 (2012, p. 182). The most recent demographic census was conducted by IBGE. It provides us with data gathered through interviews. According to the IBGE there are 10.572 Wapishana people living in the state of Roraima. Of the 8.946 Wapishana people above the age of five, 3.950 are speakers of Wapishana. An individual is considered a speaker when he or she uses the language in his or her place of residence. Assuming these

amounts to be true, the percentage of Wapishana people speaking Wapishana would be 44, a slight rise compared to 2003. IBGE counts 127 monolingual speakers of Wapishana, 4.956 monolingual speakers of Portuguese and 3.823 bilinguals within Wapishana communities (IBGE, 2010).

Only 8.133 of the 10.572 Wapishana people mentioned by the IBGE live in the indigenous territories of Serra da Lua. Others live in very small communities isolated from the main Wapishana lands, or in non-indigenous cities and towns like Boa Vista, Bonfim and Cantá. Within the two latter groups proficiency in Wapishana may be expected to be lower than within the area of Serra da Lua, so that within this area there may be a higher percentage of proficiency among the inhabitants. However, as there is no further data on this subject, I will stick with 44 percent of the Wapishana speaking their language.

When considering an absolute amount of speakers of the language, it is interesting to note that Janette Forte estimates 6.000 Wapishana speakers in Guyana (cited in Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2015). Assuming this amount to be somewhat accurate, we would come to a total amount nearing 10.000 speakers. There are no reliable estimates of the proportion of the people speaking the language in the 1980's, which makes a comparison over time impossible.

3.1.2. Transmission of Wapishana over generations

When Bruna Franchetto conducted fieldwork in Wapishana communities in the 1980's she encountered "a typical picture of linguistic loss" with a generational rupture between grandparents who spoke Wapishana fluently, bilingual parents, and a youngest generation practically monolingual in Portuguese (2008, p. 34). This rupture is also mentioned by Maxim Repetto, who points out that previous generations of Wapishana had come to think their language would be unnecessary in the future (2011, p. 99), therefore stopping to teach it to children.

Nowadays, according to Sonyellen Fonseca Ferreira, Wapishana is being transmitted to children once again through education in indigenous preschools and middle schools, where the language is used as a medium of education (personal communication, June 21, 2015). This makes sure the language is now used again by children in at least the educational domain (see 3.3.2.).

3.1.3. Domains and functions of Wapishana

Information on the domains Wapishana is used in point in different directions. On the one hand Wapishana seems to have lost the domain of the home to Portuguese in many families (Repetto M. , 2011, p. 99). On the other hand, Wapishana now has a place in middle school education, with seven middle schools in the area of Serra da Lua offering indigenous education since 2003 (Repetto M. , 2008, p. 11). Wapishana may even be used in the first year of an intercultural course at the Federal University of Roraima (UFRR), provided by the Insikiran institute since 2002 (Freitas, 2011, p. 610).

Until now, Wapishana had not been awarded a place in government yet, but has been adopted as a co-official language of the municipality of Bonfim in 2014. This means that within five years, Wapishana people will have the right to be addressed by the local administration in their own language. Overall Wapishana seems to be gaining domains lately rather than losing them. On the LVI, the information above means Wapishana has become split between the second and the fourth degree (Table 2b).

3.1.4. Standardization and literacy in Wapishana

Wapishana has gone through a difficult process of standardization. It has been written down by evangelical as well as catholic missionaries in order to spread their religions among the Wapishana. Made by non-native speakers, these orthographies felt inadequate to the Wapishana. The first orthography they made themselves came by the end of the 1980's (Franchetto, 2008). At that point literacy in the language still had to be developed. Nowadays literacy in Wapishana is becoming more common among young people due to the educational efforts mentioned above. Also, where previously only bibles were available in Wapishana, there are now more stories written in the language (OLAC, 2015).

3.1.5. Evaluating the classification of endangerment of Wapishana

As has been mentioned before in 2.2.3., classification systems generally oversimplify the situation. Single words still do not begin to cover the complexity of the situation, nor do they offer a solution in themselves other than alarming people. The Wapishana people have already been alarmed, and have started efforts to counter the threat that is posed to their language. What is useful in assessing the position of Wapishana on the LVI before 1985 and in the present situation, is finding out whether any significant improvement has been made through the last 40 years. Such an improvement can indeed be seen. Generally speaking, Wapishana can be classified as 'definitely endangered' now, one step higher than the 'severely endangered' that follows from information about the state of Wapishana around the 1980's (Table 2a). As improvements can be seen in at least 6 of the factors included, Wapishana seems to have entered on a good path.

Factor	a.	c.	d.	e.	f.	g.	h.	i.	Mean average
1980's	3		3	1	1	1	2	2	2 (1,86): severely endangered
Present	4	2	3	2	4	3	3	3	3: definitely endangered

When looking at the stages of Fishman's RLS, it is impossible to assign Wapishana one position on this continuum, as the situation described in 3.1.2. and 3.1.3. has elements of different stages in it. Overall the language may have reached stage 5, and even some evidence of stage 1 and 2 can be found in the inclusion of Wapishana in higher education and lower government. Still, it seems that there are some challenges left in stage 5 and 6, the intergenerational use of the language and the use of it in the community. There has been a gap in these areas that is in the process of being mended, but the amount of families using Portuguese counted by the IBGE shows that this hasn't been achieved yet.

Degree of endangerment	0. Extinct	1. Critically endangered	2. Severely endangered	3. Definitely endangered	4. Unsafe	5. Safe
a. Intergenerational Language Transmission	There are no speakers.	The language is used by very few speakers, mostly of great-grandparental generation.	The language is used mostly by the grandparental generation and up.	The language is used mostly by the parental generation and up.	The language is used by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains.	The language is used by all ages, from children up.
c. Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population	None speak the language.	Very few speak the language.	A minority speak the language.	A majority speak the language.	Nearly all speak the language.	All speak the language.
d. Domains and Functions	The language is not used in any domain for any function.	The language is used only in a very restricted number of domains and for very few functions.	The language is used in limited social domains and for several functions.	The language is used in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains.	Two or more languages may be used in most social domains and for most functions.	The language is used in all domains and for all functions.
e. Response to New Domains and Media	The language is not used in any new domains.	The language is used only in a few new domains.	The language is used in some new domains.	The language is used in many new domains.	The language is used in most new domains.	The language is used in all new domains.
f. Availability of Written Materials	No orthography is available to the community.	A practical orthography is known to the community and some material is being written.	Written materials exist, but they may only be useful for some members of the community; for others, they may have a symbolic significance. Literacy education in the	Written materials exist and children may be exposed to the written form at school. Literacy is not promoted through print media.	Written materials exist, and at school, children are developing literacy in the language. Writing in the language is not used in administration.	There is an established orthography and a literacy tradition with grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature and everyday media. Writing in the

			language is not a part of the school curriculum.			language is used in administration and education.
g. Official Attitudes towards Language	Minority languages are prohibited.	The dominant language is the sole official language, while non-dominant languages are neither recognized nor protected.	Government encourages assimilation to the dominant language. There is no protection for minority languages.	No explicit policy exists for minority languages; the dominant language prevails in the public domain.	Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of private domains. The use of the language is prestigious	All languages are protected.
h. Community Members' Attitudes towards Language	No one cares if the language is lost; all prefer to use a dominant language.	Only a few members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.	Some members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.	Many members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.	Most members support language maintenance.	All members value their language and wish to see it promoted.
i. Type and Quality of Documentation	No material exists.	There are only a few grammatical sketches, short word-lists and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality or are completely un-annotated.	There are some grammatical sketches, word-lists and texts useful for limited linguistic research but with inadequate coverage. Audio and video recordings of varying quality, with or without any annotation, may exist.	There may be an adequate grammar or sufficient numbers of grammars, dictionaries and texts but no everyday media; audio and video recordings of varying quality or degree of annotation may exist.	There is one good grammar and a number of adequate grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature and occasionally updated everyday media; adequate annotated high-quality audio and video recordings exist	There are comprehensive grammars and dictionaries, extensive texts, and a constant flow of language materials. Abundant annotated highquality audio and video recordings exist.
Note: factor b. is missing from this table because the LVEF does not provide a gradation for this factor.						

3.2. *Causes of the endangerment of Wapishana*

To identify the causes of the endangerment of Wapishana, I will start this section listing those of Tsunoda's causes (2006, p. 58-63) that are directly applicable to the Wapishana case. Standardization of the language is left out here as it is discussed in 3.1.4. above. They are ordered somewhat differently than in 2.1.2., reflecting the structure of this section:

1. *Geography and demography*
 - a. *Dispossession of the land*
 - b. *Destruction of the environment/habitat*
 - c. *Breakdown in isolation and proximity to towns*
 - d. *Mixing of speakers of different languages*
2. *Sociology, politics and education*
 - a. *Oppression, discrimination and exclusion*
 - b. *Low status/prestige of the group and its language*
 - c. *Assimilating language policy*
 - d. *Social development*

Portuguese colonizers first settled in Brazil in the 1500's, but it wasn't until the 1770's that they discovered Roraima (Baines, 2012, p. 33). Only in 1938 did catholic nuns start to effectively teach Portuguese in Serra da Lua (Santos L. P., 2014, p. 281). In the following subsections will discuss the developments that happened as a consequence of the colonization of Roraima in the 18th century. I will then move to more recent developments in 3.3, and discuss the language attitude and behaviour of the Wapishana in 3.4.

3.2.1. *Geography and demography*

As a consequence of the discovery of Roraima by the Portuguese in the 1770's, Wapishana territories were invaded, fragmentized (Freitas M. A., 2011, p. 603; Santos L. P., 2014, p. 280). The Wapishana people were replaced into controlled settlements together with Macushi indigenous people, and developed a high level of contact with both Macushi and Portuguese, with instances of intermarriage (Santos L. P., 2014, p. 278; Baines, 2012, p. 42) (Santos A. d., 2009, p. 16). This new geographical division broke up their natural habitat and therewith part of their traditional way of life (Santos L. P., 2014, p. 281), as the forests and hills they used to hunt in received a new purpose as mostly cattle farms (Silva, 1994, p. 43). Until 1982 no Wapishana territory was ever recognized (Carneiro, 2007, p. 100).

As mentioned before, are few differences between the Wapishana in Guyana and those in Roraima. Still, the border imposed on them from above brought different cultural influences with it, so a type of division resulted (Franchetto, 2008, p. 45). The Wapishana of Guyana are generally seen to be more traditional in their customs, as their way of life was less disrupted (Santos L. P., 2014, p. 278).

3.2.2. *Sociology, politics and education*

During the colonial regime, the Wapishana were exploited for manual labour (Santos L. P., 2014, p. 278), but also afterwards they remained repressed by white landowners and miners (Baines, 2012, p. 33). The colonial empire and the subsequent republics until 1985 left a legacy of discrimination, prejudice and indifference towards the Wapishana (Freitas, 2011, p. 603). The Wapishana and their language had very low prestige compared to the Portuguese speaking ruling class. Portuguese had a very high prestige even among the Wapishana

themselves (Franchetto, 2008, p. 39). The Wapishana were seen by the colonizers as simple, rural folk and as “docile and obedient workers” (Stradelli, 1889, cited in Baines, 2012, p. 34), and their language as rural slang (Franchetto, 2008, p. 34). They were told that their own histories, so carefully passed on through oral tradition, were just lies and myths (p. 41). When Wapishana myths were first put on paper, they were vulgarized and infantilized (pp. 42, 48).

The Portuguese colonial language policy, and later that of Brazil, was one of integration and assimilation (Santos L. P., 2014, p. 276). Portuguese had been established as “the one and only language of Brazil” since 1757 (p. 8), and a policy of imposition and cultural assimilation permeated education (p. 11). Education for indigenous people, as far as it was provided, had the unification of the nation under one language and the training of workers to build up the country as main goals (Repetto M. , 2011, p. 89; Silva M. F., 1994, p. 43). It was not until after the end of the military regime in 1985 that the first initiatives for bilingual education emerged, due to persistent efforts on the part of a movement of indigenous teachers rather than on the part of the government (Silva, 1994). In the specific case of Wapishana, located in the periphery, effective Portuguese education on the part of catholic nuns only reached Serra da Lua in 1938, 50 years before the new constitution (Santos L. P., 2014, p. 281).

As we have seen in 2.1.1., a language loses vocabulary as it loses traditional domains. This happened to Wapishana as well, as the new economic system of cattle-ranching and mining turned many Wapishana away from their original occupations, hunting and growing crops (Santos L. P., 2014, p. 281).

3.3. Recent developments

3.3.1. Recent developments in political activism and acknowledgement of indigenous rights

*“The indigenous peoples are entitled to their social organization, costumes, **languages** and tradition and to rights over their traditional territories...”* (Constituição Federal Brasileira, 1985, cited in Monte, 2000, p. 122, my translation, emphasis added).

With these words, the voices of the indigenous communities of Brazil, that had been silenced for such a long time, could finally be heard. Small scale actions by NGO’s and indigenous organizations by the end of the 1970’s had been building up to this moment (Monte, 2000, p. 125). The first recognition of an indigenous territory in Serra da Lua had been in 1982 (Carneiro, 2007, p. 100). It is therefore that the 1980’s are taken as a turning point in this paper. More recognitions in Serra da Lua followed in 1991 (p. 123), 1996 (p. 126, 132, 137), 2003 (p. 141, 143) and 2005 (p. 146, 154). The Wapishana had finally been given back the rights to at least parts of their traditional territory.

The educational system changed as well. As Brazil acknowledged itself as a multilingual country, a door opened towards education in indigenous languages. This was achieved due to efforts by indigenous teachers (Freitas, 2011, p. 604) and the Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR) (Freitas, 2011, p. 606).

A new orthography resulting from Franchetto’s work in the late 80’s, helped to assert Wapishana as a real and complex language, as opposed to rural slang and Traditional myths began to be seen as empowering rather than embarrassing (Franchetto, 2008, pp. 41, 47). The involvement of the Insikiran institute, one of the fruits of indigenous activism, also helped to raise the prestige of the indigenous cause in general by organizing courses at a university

level for indigenous teachers and about indigenous territory management (Freitas, 2011, pp. 606, 609).

However, the wounds of colonialism are not fully healed. There is still discrimination and prejudice towards indigenous peoples in Roraima (Freitas M. A., p. 611), and violent harassment and territorial invasion was still going on the 1990's (Penglase, 1994). In the meantime, Mainstream media don't seem to acknowledge the legitimacy or even the presence of Indigenous languages in Brazil, and many Brazilians are unaware of any other language than Portuguese being spoken in the country (Massini-Cagliari, 2004, pp. 1, 4).

As to social development, with the coming of seven indigenous middle schools in the area of Serra da Lua since 2003 (Repetto M. , 2008, p. 11), other elements of modernity have also found their way into the area, and young indigenous people are more and more exposed to mass media in Portuguese through television. They are also more likely to want to leave Serra da Lua to get a job that fits their now better level of education (Repetto M. , 2011, p. 98)

3.3.2. An evaluation of revitalization efforts in Roraima

In the last sections, already some remarks have been made about the current state of indigenous education in Roraima. Here I will look more closely at the exact strategies for revitalization that are being used in the Wapishana case, in order to compare them to the strategies discussed in 2.4.1..

Looking at the indigenous fundamental and middle schools in Serra da lua, Mandulão observes that education is being given by local indigenous teachers, and that the indigenous language is being taught throughout the years (Mandulão, et al., 2012, p. 67). The curriculum, which is determined by indigenous teachers themselves, includes singing, dancing, indigenous art and other folkloric subjects alongside language classes (Santos L. P., 2014, p. 288). According to Sonyellen Fonseca Ferreira, schools in Serra da Lua use Wapishana as a medium of education for all subjects except the Portuguese language itself (personal communication, June 21, 2015). According to Repetto, indigenous communities have established "a dynamic that integrates the school into communal actions." (2011, p. 94), making education a responsibility of the whole community (Santos L. P., 2014, p. 277). High schools do offer the study of indigenous languages, but don't use it as a medium of education yet (Repetto, M., 2011, p. 97).

Considering the information gathered above, the strategy employed in Serra da Lua seems to be immersion in the younger years, leaning towards a neighbourhood strategy that is facilitated by the fact that those who are benefitting from the education already live closely together in relatively small communities. However, with the passing to high school, teaching continues in Portuguese, with Wapishana only as a subject. Had the communities been monolingual in Wapishana, it would have seemed the transitional bilingual model was being applied. The trouble is that this model is meant to ease the achievement of literacy by using the mother language. As Wapishana children generally don't learn the language at home anymore, the mother language benefit is not relevant in this situation.

Other than educational achievements, another step has also been made recently. The municipality of Bonfim, Roraima, that comprises the majority of the indigenous communities of Serra da Lua, has recognized Wapishana and Macushi as co-official languages in 2014. This means the municipal council has committed itself to provide documents in the three languages, and tend to indigenous people in their own language, all by 2019 (Pontes, 2015).

It was concluded in 3.1.5. that Wapishana was in stages 1, 2, 5 at the same time, while still missing the necessary diglossia that needs to be attained at stage 6. For many Wapichana the mother tongue is Portuguese now, which is used in everyday situations at home and in the community (Repetto M. , 2011, p. 99). From Fishman's point of view one might say that demands for better schooling practice mentioned by Repetto (2011, p. 100) should be answered before putting money into administrative translation and road signs. Following Romaines argument, however, increased political power for the Wapishana people may result from the official recognition of their language. Apart from political power there is also publicity to be gained. As Bonfim is only the third municipality in Brazil recognizing indigenous languages as co-officials (Pontes, 2015), it's recognition may lead to a widespread awareness of the existence of Wapishana, which may be beneficial to the cause.

It is unclear whether language behaviour outside of school has changed for the better, as no sources could be found attesting that. The least that can be said for Wapishana is that more people are once again proficient in the language, and that this proficiency is still growing.

3.4. Language attitude and behaviour of the Wapishana

The causes discussed in 3.2.1. and 3.2.2. have resulted in a negative attitude of the Wapishana towards their own language, as they were convinced it was inferior and useless, unfit for the modern world, and a source for their discrimination (Repetto M. , 2011, p. 99). However, through the whole process of language abandonment that ensued this negative attitude, there have been elements in the Wapishana communities that have held the value of their language high, mainly a young class of teachers, who began standardizing their language. (Franchetto, 2008, p. 33)

Franchetto says that those who first tried to standardize Wapishana had the impression the language was simply less fit to be written than a naturally written language like Portuguese (2008, p. 43), suggesting a feeling of inferiority. Still, the enormous effort that it has taken on the part of indigenous organizations to make indigenous education possible reflects that some people at least cared about the issue. In the 1990's communities expressed their disapproval of a "disregard for indigenous culture and languages" educational methods (Repetto M. , 2011, p. 91).

Laiana Pereira Santos speaks of "the struggle of the Wapishana people for a specific and differentiated education" (Santos L. P., 2014, my translation). This struggle was made by a broad coalition of indigenous organizations. One could say, with respect to the table in 3.1.5., that at least some members of Wapishana communities have kept supporting the language, even though this support was not wide and strong enough to prevent language shift. A negative must have caused the pattern of intergenerational rupture that Franchetto first encountered.

Following the developments in the past 40 years, education in Wapishana is now successfully being implemented, and adult teachers even learn Wapishana in order to be able to use the language as a medium of education (Sonyellen Fonseca Ferreira, personal communication, June 21, 2015). Still, negative attitudes persist in the wish of some members of Wapishana communities to give up being indigenous and become white instead (Repetto M., 2011, p. 98). Some Wapishana don't want specific indigenous education as they think it will not help their position on the job market to speak an indigenous language (p. 103). However, looking at disapproval of non-indigenous teachers by students and parents, and their continuing demands to learn their own languages (Repetto M. , 2011, pp. 91, 99), one may conclude that opinions in favour of the language seem to have become the majority, or

at least the opinions most widely heard. The efforts of teachers to learn the language to be able to teach show a positive language behaviour, and at least a beginning reverse in language shift.

Chapter 4: Discussion and Conclusion

4.1. *Critiques of language revitalization literature*

Before moving on to the conclusion of this paper, this section will first consider the limits to this paper's conclusions and then mention two points of critique with respect to the theories cited above in Chapter 2. Firstly, this paper is limited in the research that could be done to make it. It was not possible to conduct a research on the ground to ask the specific questions that needed answering to those involved. It also proved difficult to reach local academics in search for their perspectives, with Sonyellen Fonseca Ferreira being the only one responding to my e-mails to Brazil. Therefore I had to rely on comments made in publications about the Wapishana that had a different angle of inquiry. A study on location assessing the successes and failures of the revitalization efforts would benefit these efforts greatly as it would provide insight in the specific areas of revitalization that may need a different approach or solution.

Moving on to the theoretical framework, the limits of use of classification systems are worth mentioning. Firstly, having been made for the purpose of alarming people about the ongoing language loss in the world, most scale systems have difficulties coping with moves in another direction. As a language is slowly gaining domains, it hardly fits on the EGIDS anymore, as the degree above its last classification is generally just losing speakers a little more slowly. It would be beneficial for classifying purposes to have a scale on which a language can move in both directions. Those who create such classifications can learn from Fishman's stages, that are oriented towards revitalization.

Secondly, it is inaccurate to think of a speaker community as homogenous. As the Wapishana settlements are spread out over a large territory, and have different distances to both Macushi and Portuguese influence, it is illogical to think that the language is in the same amount of danger in every community. This is one more reason to not put too much weight into a single label.

Looking at the arguments in favour of the saving of language, it seems some of them are questionable in their grounding. In apocalyptic statements about the loss of languages, arguments from the discourse on biodiversity are often transferred to discussions on linguistic diversity. Crystal says that if a lack of genetic diversity threatens the survival of a species, a lack of linguistic diversity threatens the survival of humankind. He argues that our success on earth comes from our ability to adapt, and that we would lose part of that ability with the loss of languages (p.43-44). Tsunoda, reviewing these types of argumentations, comes to the conclusion that indeed valuable traditional knowledge is preserved in languages, but that linguistic diversity "does not seem necessary for the survival of humans" (2006, p. 154).

He tackles the argument pointing out that numerous peoples the world over have survived the loss of their traditional language. In this argumentation, he seems to heedlessly accept the assumption that a world without linguistic diversity can ever exist, passing by diversity within languages. Also Krauss, in his apocalyptic vision of a world with less than 600 languages, fails to remark on human's innate tendency to divert, which lives on even within what we may call one language. An example of this diversity is provided by Edgar W. Scheider's study of the varieties of English that have come into being since colonial times. He mentions not only the "emergence of a diverse range of postcolonial varieties [of English] around the world" (2007, p. preface), but also that these varieties within themselves already show "signs of beginning fragmentation" (p. 132). It seems to follow from

Schneider's findings that we don't need to worry too much about the loss of diversity in itself. For the purpose of convincing the world of the importance of an issue that is directly affecting the lives of so many people, who are stigmatized and discriminated against, who feel repressed in the use of their mother language, I suggest that those who wish to advocate for the case use argumentations that are less easily questioned.

4.2. Is there a chance for Wapishana?

Reviewing the seemingly hopeless situation that Franchetto reported in the 1980's, one would have expected to see a rapid decline in presence and a far bleaker picture of the use of Wapishana nowadays than was encountered in the 2010 census. Does this mean an important turnaround has already happened? Looking at the information collected in Chapter 3, one could find the following answers to the questions posed in 1.3.1.:

1. *Wapishana is still 'definitely endangered', but improvements have been made in its situation over the last 40 years.*
2. *A combination of geographical, demographical, sociological and political circumstances have played a role in the endangerment and revitalization of Wapishana.*
 - a. *The endangerment of Wapishana was caused by dispossession of the land, destruction of the habitat, proximity to towns, mixing of speakers of different languages, oppression, low prestige of the group and its language, assimilating language policy and social development*
 - b. *Changes in that situation have been the recognition of indigenous territories, improving the prestige of Wapishana, diverse language policy and the recognition of Wapishana as an official language.*
3. *The strategies employed today seem successful in that they function and are appreciated by the Wapishana.*
 - a. *Current strategies influence the attitude of Wapishana positively as it gains prestige through education.*
 - b. *The immersion in schools has added the school as a domain for the use of Wapishana, thereby ensuring continuing use. Whether it is used in more domains or not, proficiency is rising.*

Putting all these answers together, we can see two things. The first is that change has come for the better for Wapishana, with more changes waiting in the future, that may only make things better. The second is that Wapishana is still far from safe. It has skipped a generation and it is not easy to mend the gap that ensued. There are troubles within the education that has been fought so hard over. To conclude the findings of this paper, the following can be said: The present situation in Roraima regarding education and revitalization of Wapishana offers a positive perspective for the future, as education and recognition are growing. Chances are that Wapishana will not survive the next century due to its small population and due to social developments. On the other hand, the generation gap could have been bigger. With Portuguese having been brought in less than two generations ago, awareness may have come just in time for Wapishana. Only the future may tell us what will become of the language, but in the socio-political position of the Wapishana, big steps for the better have already been made.

4.4. Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Sonyellen Fonseca Ferreira, for taking the time to respond to my inquiries and providing relevant and current information on the implication of indigenous education in Serra da Lua.

I want to thank Judy Okely and Leo Keller for proofreading the paper and making useful corrections in my use of English.

I would like to thank dr. Margot van den Berg for providing illuminating and motivating counsel throughout the writing process.

Finally, thanks also go to Stijn Timmer, Eva Trapman, Imre Ploeg and Rinke van Diermen, for sharing their extra-disciplinary perspectives on the issues in this paper with me in informal conversations. They have had a considerable influence on my own perspective on language revitalization.

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