

**Isolated regions or interactive hotspots?
Language contact paradoxes in remote areas of northwest Amazonia**

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In the Amazon basin, riverine headwaters and interfluvial zones have long represented areas of relative inaccessibility to colonial and national infrastructure; yet many of these regions have also been centers of gravity for interaction and exchange among indigenous peoples. In fact, some of today's remotest regions were once traversed by busy trade routes, and even now may be home to groups who regularly circulate to attend each other's festivals, visit relatives, find spouses, or apprentice for shamanic training.

These variable interactive dynamics also structure language contact according to diverse parameters. In regions that have historically been more accessible to non-indigenous agents, we tend to see extensive contact with socially dominant languages that are superimposed upon local frameworks; while in regions that are more inaccessible to outsiders, we are more likely to see evidence of long-term, relatively egalitarian multilingualism (Lüpke 2016, Pakendorf et al. 2021). These dynamics can foster quite different sociolinguistic practices and outcomes; while socially imbalanced frameworks are likely to promote language mixing and shift, more egalitarian multilingualism tends to favor long-term language maintenance and grammatical convergence, while code-switching and lexical borrowing are more constrained and surface primarily in ceremonial or shamanic genres (Epps 2018, 2021).

The talk considers these contrasts through the lens of the northwest Amazon, focusing on the Naduhup language family. As can be seen in other parts of Amazonia, history has in some respects upended the social and linguistic dynamics that were once present in the region – many of the languages spoken along the major rivers in the colonial period have become extinct, while those of the interfluvial Naduhup and other more remote peoples have been maintained, and have even preserved some diversity of registers and genres. At the same time, the Naduhup languages show evidence of extensive contact with neighboring languages, some of which have not been spoken for centuries. As we explore here, this contact-driven restructuring has led to strikingly divergent typological profiles across the Naduhup family, suggesting that, under these circumstances, grammatical morphology and typological structure have been far more innovative over time than has basic vocabulary. These outcomes suggest that a closer look at languages spoken in remote areas can offer important revisions to commonly encountered generalizations regarding the dynamics of language contact and change.

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