

# The Pijao of Natagaima: Post-Linguicide Indigenous Identity and Language

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## Abstract

Linguicide is a government act that illegalizes the use of a language. In Colombia, indigenous languages were illegalized in all but the most remote regions until 1991. While all indigenous languages were seriously affected, the Pijao language disappeared completely. In the generations that followed, the Pijao suffered an immediate change to their social identity as indigenous people and their recognition as an indigenous people. This study examines the nature of indigenous identity and language loss in the Pijao community in Natagaima. This investigation, through focus groups, examined the relationship between language loss and current Pijao indigenous identity in addition to current language use and the perceived causes of the linguicide. What was discovered is that indigenous identity is dependent on being othered in relation to colonist identity and that language is the most powerful tool of this othering. In removing language as a tool of othering and fore/backgrounding, the indigenous community suffers an immediate change in its social identity and a progressive weakening in the generations that follow the linguicide. Additionally, it created the largest list to date of Pijao and provides an analysis of current Natagaima Pijao speech. Finally, it examines the Pijao linguicide and examines the conclusion that the creation of the official Pijao reserves may have influenced in the disappearance of the Pijao language.

## 1. Introduction

In Colombia, the Pijao<sup>1</sup> are depicted as having been the most aggressive and warlike nation in pre-Hispanic Colombia: nation of cannibals and river-folk whose demise allowed for the formation of the modern country (Lucena Salmoral, 1963; Universidad del Tolima, 2010, Universidad del Rosario, 2014). However, this was not the case: The Pijao are still exist. The majority of the surviving Pijao live in the lower half of the department of Tolima with scattered communities in the national capital Bogotá and in the departments of Huila and Caquetá. Yet, their former federation stretched from the Combeima Canyon in Ibagué (Tolima) until Neiva (Huila), and was divided into two basic groups: the highland Pijao and the lowland Pijao. Today only the lowland Pijao survive and number slightly under 59,000 within 205 registered communities (Consejo Regional Indígena del Tolima, 2013). What sets them apart from other indigenous groups in Colombia is that they were the first to obtain a government recognized reserve in modern times. However, they are also one of the few surviving Colombian ethnicities to have completely lost their language in a country that in modern times is revitalising indigenous languages (Simons & Fennig, 2017).

Language loss is an important issue for linguists and indigenous peoples alike. There are different reasons behind language loss and it is always occurring, albeit at rates and in different ways (Crystal, 2000). It should be noted also that language loss is not restricted to smaller, less influential languages as even

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<sup>1</sup> Pronounced [pi'hao].

large powerful languages fall into decline and are then lost (Mufwene, 2006). Economic changes, educational pressures, the media and government imposition are all common factors in the change of linguistic environments (Crystal, 2000). In all cases of language loss, one must consider the degree of agency that the community has in the loss of its language. Ladefoged (1992) argues that languages disappear and surge frequently with speakers adapting to conditions that favor them. However, Dorian (1993) counters that communities that lose or give up their language are unlikely to be real agents in terms of language choice as they are more than likely to be socially disadvantaged. Dorian also argues that the effects of language choice are often evident in later generations which feel the ethnolinguistic loss with regret or resentment. This indicates that even though the community may reap an immediate benefit from the language change, the ethnicity as a whole will suffer over time from its linguistic loss.

The loss of the Pijao language can be considered to have been the result of linguicide - a concerted effort by national and regional authorities to illegalise and kill a language (Zuckerman, 2012). While the term 'linguistic genocide' is more frequently encountered in literature, linguicide is the most apt term here. Linguistic genocide as a term has its basis in a certain interpretation of the International Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002; 2008 & 2010). Two of the five definitions of genocide in the UN Convention could (arguably) be applied to language - II (b) 'causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group' and II (e) 'forcibly transferring children of the group to another group' (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008).

The issue with linguistic genocide is that genocide directly refers to the forced loss of a people or a culture. Understanding language disappearance via linguistic genocide is always going to be difficult given that the definitions do not directly apply to language, and language death would have to be argued via people or culture. Thus, the term linguicide is more applicable as linguicide addresses language death alone. Linguicide itself can be further divided into overt and covert linguicide. Overt linguicide refers to situations where *all* use of the language is prohibited by law i.e. the language is prohibited in all public and private spheres. Covert linguicide refers to where the government openly favours the use of a non-mother tongue language in education or media, and results in unstable diglossia and language shift over time. Just as linguistic genocide is an act of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1997), linguicide should be acknowledged as the same: an act by a dominant force to impose its language at the cost of another. As such, the purpose of linguicide is the eradication of culture, resistance and group identity.

In the case of the Pijao, the linguicide was overt and the target was identity (Aguirre-Licht, 2005). The Pijao lost their language not all that long ago, although exactly when the language was last heard is debated with different sources putting it either in the 1950s (Simons & Fennig, 2017) or 1960s (Durbin & Seijas, 1973). Colombian indigenous groups were targeted in a long line of linguistic legislation that culminated in the Colombian Constitution of 1886 which decreed a unification of race, religion and language in the entirety of the country. In order to do so, it created law a year later (law 89 of 1890) which empowered the military and the church to crush indigenous languages and practices, and to replace them with Castilian and Catholicism (Pineda Camacho, 2005; Areiza Londoño, 2010). Living up to their warlike reputation; the Pijao fought against these laws, and for their land which was being colonized at an alarming rate (Universidad del Tolima, 2010; Ministerio del Interior, 2013). However, while the Pijao obtained the prestige of being the first indigenous group in modern times to obtain reserves (something that had been removed at the creation of the Republic), it came at the cost of their language. Between 1950 to 1960, the Pijao language only had a handful of L1 speakers remaining and by 1970, none could be found at all (Marshall & Seijas, 1973) - the language had been successfully killed by the Colombian government.

Natagaima, where this investigation took place, was one of the last places where the Pijao language was heard (Lucena Salmoral, 1962). Natagaima is both a town and municipality in the South of the department of Tolima (see map on the following page). It takes its name from the Natagaima - one of the largest and most emblematic Pijao tribes. Today, it is the home of 47 Pijao communities, of which 24 are organized into government recognised councils (Consejo Regional Indígena del Tolima, 2013). Only a few generations have passed since the linguicide in Natagaima and its effects on indigenous identity may still

be observable in the community. This investigation looked at how linguicide has affected Pijao indigenous identity in Natagaima and what measures the Natagaimas have taken in order to create a unique linguistic identity. Through a series of focus groups, it focused heavily on the effects of language loss on indigenous identity. However, the investigation also explores current Natagaima speech, how the language was lost and contains the largest list of Pijao words to date (with commentary on current orthography).



Figure 1: Map of Colombia showing Natagaima. Source: Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi (2005) (marking of Natagaima mine).

## 2. Language Loss, Indigeneity and the Pijao

### 2.1 Colombia and its indigenous languages

While it is known that the number of indigenous languages has fallen, it is not known exactly how many languages existed at the time of European arrival in Colombia. However, accounts at the time give a figure at around 75 (González Pérez & Rodrigues de Montes, 2000) and more modern sources put that figure at 85 Ethnologue (Simmons and Fennig, 2017). In a similar vein, it is not known exactly how many indigenous languages exist today in Colombia. Simons and Fennig (2017) give the precise number of 78 while the government avoids an exact number and estimates there to be more than 65 (González de Pérez, 2017). However, despite a checkered past with its indigenous languages and being a predominately Spanish speaking country today, modern day Colombia prides itself on its plurilingualism and at the time of the last census (2005), 607,226 of the nation's 41,468,384 people spoken an indigenous language (González de Pérez, 2011).

### 2.2 The Pijao and their Language

As mentioned in section 1, most Colombians mistakenly believe the Pijao to be extinct; yet the Pijao number close to 60,000 individuals. Despite having an apparently healthy population, it must be mentioned that the Pijao are on the government's list of 32 indigenous groups in imminent risk of extermination due to land, history and culture loss, and emigration (Consejo Regional Indígena del Tolima, 2013). Although they have a long history in Colombia, The Pijao have been the centre of several misunderstandings and myths in Colombia. Many of these being the result of the long history of violence and war against the Conquistadores and, later, the Colombian government. The result of which is that we have a limited understanding of the historical Pijao.

The name Pijao has been written as Pijao, Pixao and Pyxao (Loukotka, 1963) and yet itself is not the original autonym of the group (Oliveros, 1996). The original name of the group appears to have been '*Pinao*' (Simon, 1627; Rivet, 1943). The name was changed to Pijao based on the pejorative change of the medial consonant from [n] to [x] to reflect the Spanish word '*Pija*' (penis). It has theorised that this pejorative use of Pijao was a reference to the Pinao's public nudity and display of the penis (Rivet, 1943; Hernandez de Alba, 1946). Be it what it may the origin of the name 'Pijao', 'Pinao' fell out of use and even the ethnic group today uses 'Pijao'.

Prior to Spanish conquest, the Pijao were originally a confederation of tribes living in central Colombia sharing language and culture (Oliveros, 1996). The tribes inside the Pijao federation have named as the Cutiva, Coyaima, Natagaima, Aipe, Irico, Paloma, Ambeima, Amoyá, Tumbo, Poima (Yaporoge), Mayto, Mola, Otaima, Cocataima, Tuamo, Bulira, Ocama, Behuini, Ombecho, Anatoima, Pana, Guarro, Tonuro, Lucira, Hamay, Zearco and Putima (Cubillos, 1946). These tribes were divided into highland and lowland tribes, and which were at constant war with each other (Lucena Salmoral, 1963). Of the tribes that remain, the Natagaima and Coyaima are the largest and most influential (Oliveros, 1996). The confederation was river-faring society and while having no central political structure, it was organised into small familial groups of 40 – 100 people led by chieftains and mohánes (medicine men/shamans) and practiced exogamous marriage between neighbouring groups to maintain order. As a loose society, they lived off hunting and basic agriculture and were known for advanced medical practices, cranial deformation and gold-smithing (Rivet, 1943; Lucena Salmoral, 1963; Oliveros, 1996).

The original extension of the Pijao has been the topic of much debate with authors differing on the exact delineation of the Pijao's borders with their neighbours (Cubillos, 1946). However, it is considered that they ranged from Ibagué in the North to just about Neiva in the South, from close to Caicedonia in the

west to the Dolores in the east (Consejo Regional Indígena del Tolima, 2013). They were surrounded by the Panche (with whom they shared a language (Rivet, 1943)), Quimbayas, Páez, Dujos, Babdujos and Manipos (Ramírez Sendoya, 1952). Today, the Pijao are concentrated in reserves in the south of the department of Tolima with a few communities in the north of Huila and in Caquetá. The maps below illustrate the former extension of the Pijao confederation compared with the current communities in Tolima.

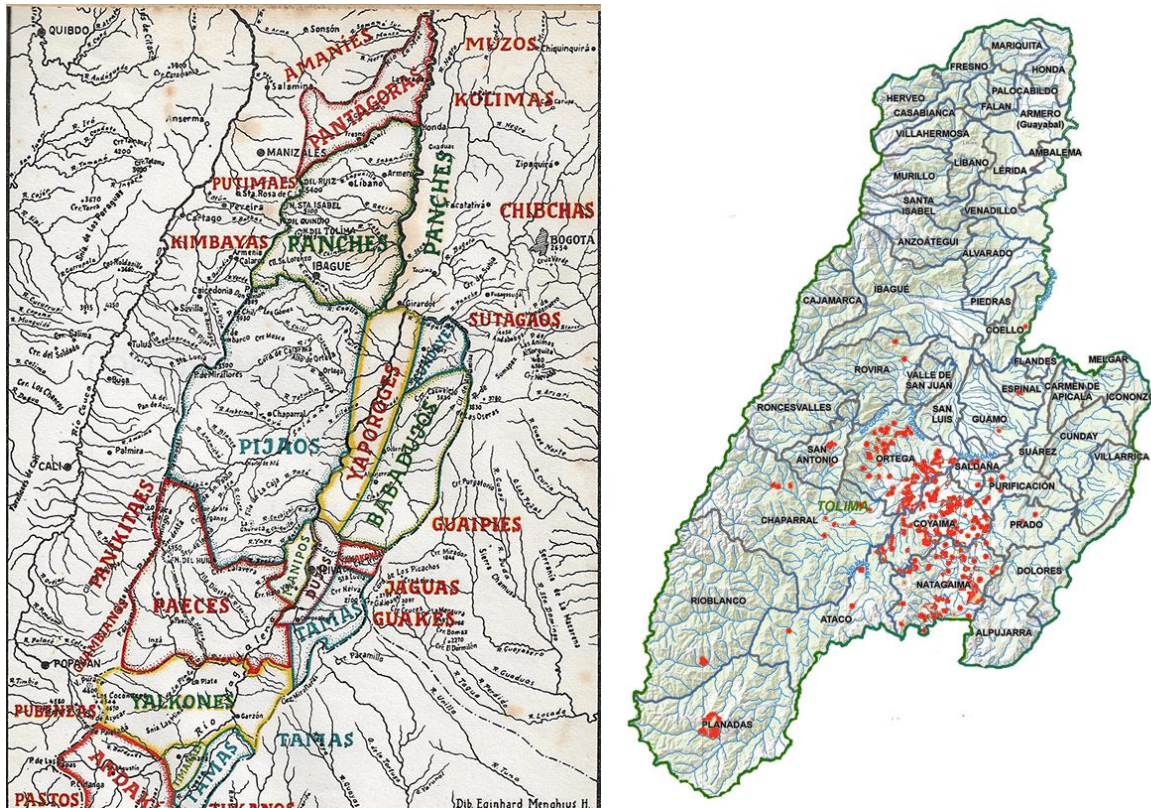


Figure 2: Comparison of Pijao extension. The map on the left (taken from Ramírez Sendoya, 1952) shows the extension of the Pijao in pre-Colonial times, whereas the map on the right shows the current department of Tolima with the current recognized Pijao communities (taken from Consejo Regional Indígena del Tolima, 2014).

Today the Pijao are an agricultural people. They generally live in or around *resguardos* (indigenous reserves) which are organised into one or more *cabildos* (indigenous councils). The cabildos themselves are run by governors who are democratically elected by the indigenous communities and policed by the *guardia indígena* (indigenous guard) (Consejo Regional Indígena del Tolima, 2013). While communities are still roughly based around family units, they are no longer exogamous and have left their traditional religion for Catholicism (Oliveros, 1996). Modern Pijao communities raise cattle and plant maize, plantain and fruit trees and most are below the poverty line (Consejo Regional Indígena del Tolima, 2014).

Like the Pijao, the Pijao language has also been the centre of misunderstandings and debate, and very little is known about the language itself. It is known that Pijao is the same language as was spoken by the Panche (the Pijao's immediate neighbours to the north) and the language retains the name Pijao even though the Panche and Pijao were different groups with different political systems (Simon, 1892; Rivet, 1943; Durbin & Seijas, 1973). Many historical sources placed the Pijao language in the Cariban family e.g.

Simon (1892), Rivet (1943) and Loukotka (1963); and many current sources continue with this trend e.g. González Pérez & Rodríguez de Montes (2000), Ramírez Poloche (2012), and Simons & Fennig, (2017). This link to the Cariban family was based on the analysis of very limited word lists and by the comparison of archaeological data from the Pijao. However, Durbin & Seijas (1973) argue (very persuasively) that the Pijao language cannot be placed inside the Cariban family on the grounds that the word lists available at the time were too small to not allow for placement based on loan-words, and also that many of the languages used in prior studies were no longer classified as Cariban (e.g. Choco). At the time of this investigation, the only sources of Pijao words were a small list of words from Fray Simon (1892), a dictionary of indigenous words from Tolima (the Ramírez Sendoya Dicionary of 1952) and the Loukotka word list (30 words long). While an interesting work in itself, the Ramírez Sendoya dictionary is of questionable worth as the words were collected from several indigenous groups from around Tolima and cannot be separated into their languages of origin. To further the loss of the language, there is also no record either of the morphosyntax of the Pijao language thus making rescue of the language impossible.

The linguicide of Pijao was the result of the 1886 constitution compounded with law 89 of 1890 which ordered the destruction and prohibition of indigenous languages in all '*civilized in an effort to unify the country under race, religion and language*'. Within 70 years of the creation of these laws, which were enforced forcibly through the church and the military (both of which were particularly strong in Tolima), the Pijao language had disappeared (Consejo Regional de Indígenas del Tolima, 2013). Recent changes to linguistic legislation favour fortifying indigenous languages - Article 10 of the Constitution of 1991 makes indigenous languages co-official in the territories where they are spoken, and Law 1381 of 2010 provides a wide array of protections to native languages. However, these changes to the law came too late for the Pijao language which had been effectively crushed by the state 50 years beforehand. While linguistic research among the indigenous peoples of Colombia is growing; the Pijao have been ignored in terms of linguistic research since the disappearance of the language.

### 2.3 Identity Theory

Much of the research done in identity in linguistics, sociology and social science today is based on Tajfel's (1978) 'Social Identity'. This theory posits identity as being divisible into two parts. The first being one's self concept as understood from one's participation in and knowledge of social circles i.e. social identity. The second is identity formed by those qualities that are unique to the individual such as physique and personality i.e. personal identity. To further the division of personal and social identities, Hecht (2001) argues that individuals possess not one but four levels of identity - a personal identity composed of self-concepts, enacted identity (identity expressed through language), a relational identity (an identity relative to others) and a communal identity defined through group membership. Pavlenko and Blackridge (2004) see identity as a social, discursive and narrative strategy used to claim social spaces through the cohesion of often disparate personal narratives. They propose a system which also comprises three different social identities - a non-negotiable imposed identity, an accepted but non-negotiated assumed identity and a negotiable identity. It should be noted that regardless of the theory that one chooses to explain the variety of identities available, identities are far from stable and are under constant pressures from social changes that affect personal distinctiveness and self-esteem (Jaspal, 2009).

Indigenous identity is somewhat difficult to define as there tends to exist a friction between self-recognition, academic recognition and institutional recognition (Corntassel, 2003). Self-recognition boasts a wildly varying set of criteria depending on the group in question. For the Yaguará of Colombia, indigeneity means descent from the first inhabitants (González Vélez, 2011) whereas for the Xocó of Brazil indigeneity doesn't require descent but the practice of traditional customs (Hoffman French, 2004), and the Camëntsá (also of Colombia) require territory, traditional memory and authorities, the practice of traditional customs and social parameters governing social behaviours and graces (Jamiouy Juagibioy,

2005). Academic recognition tends to construe indigenous identity as those based on pre-colonial traditions (Wilmer, 1993), descent from the original inhabitants (Wilmer and Alfred, 1997), certain roots in a territory (Anaya, 1996) and resistance to colonial identity and practices (Green, 2009). Institutional recognition runs the range from ambiguous definitions of the United Nations (2007 & 2014) to the extremely strict guidelines given by the World Bank governing income type, lifestyle, beliefs, institutions, territories and, importantly, language (2001). The institutional definition given by the Colombian government (and as such the definition applied to the Pijao) is that of a people directly descended from the original inhabitants that still maintain traditional values (1991).

## 2.4 Language and Identity

The connection between language and identity has been amply studied by academics and is a field that continues to produce new and interesting results showing moves from idealized notions of identity to positions of multiple negotiated linguistic identities. Fishman (1991) states that language and identity are closely tied (particularly mother tongue identity) as the tie between language and identity is often considered immutable and the loss of language often results in damage to cultural identity. Jaspal (2009) notes that language is a robust marker of identity and may indeed displace all other markers as it alone in its salience can tie together and divide groups. Rajagopalam (2001) writes that language is used for identity formation; but not so much for negotiation but as an active means of Othering i.e. separating others from a certain in-group. Given that other language choices are available, one's choice of language is vital as the choice inevitably becomes a political one in terms of group navigation and political Othering. This is the case Rajagopalam points out in the linguistic choices made in post-colonial countries - choosing a local language aids in Othering colonizers and helps to create a new in-group identity for the new country, a point supported in Wiley et al (2014) who add that for minority language speakers, language has become an important marker of social status and part of social identity. Byram (2006) states that language is used by major political players as an effective means of Othering. Finally, Lo & Reyes (2004) link this Othering to relationality —the concept that language is used to mark relative positions in terms of other groups i.e. *I am group X; therefore, they are group Y*.

Interestingly, the absence of indigenous language from most official criteria for indigeneity would suggest that speaking an indigenous language is not important to indigenous identity. Indeed, Schmidt (2008) suggests just that by stating that language loss does not remove ethnicity. However, this comes into direct conflict with the views of many indigenous peoples. Shaw (2011) writes that many First Nation people feel as though they are 'nobodies' without their own language and are unable to claim a real title for themselves without their original language. Jamiyo Juagibioy (2005) also writes that without an indigenous language one cannot truly claim the identity of an indigenous person. Tökölyová (2009) states that the loss of the Māori language was one of the most important steps in their loss of identity as a people and Gregory (1995) writes how the use of a non-native language (in this case English) as a Native American serves as a constant reminder of the conquest and loss of his traditional culture.

## 2.5 Linguicide

Research into language death using the term linguicide is limited as the term 'linguistic genocide' is generally used. Under 'linguistic genocide', investigation into the phenomenon abounds. Covert linguicide uses education in another language to displace an indigenous language and has been widely examined (e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar (2010) and Wiley et al (2014)). The real damage done by covert linguicide is the cutting a people off from scientific endeavours and progress in their own language. This results in the groups being either subsumed them into the colonist culture (Löwstedt, 2007) or left at the mercy of

international assistance that may discriminate on the basis of indigenous language (Phillipson, 1997). Overt linguicide has actually received less research into the effects that it has on the people involved despite it being more dramatic in nature than covert linguicide. What is known is that overt linguicide causes anger at colonists and a deep disconnection from society (Gregory, 1995), a sense of emptiness (Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar, 2010) and a sense of cultural regret (Delgado-Olson, 2014). Post-linguicide indigenous groups have yet to receive any real attention regarding how they retain an indigenous linguistic identity. While language revitalization is often the key step for groups that have experienced covert linguicide (Reyhner, 2010), overt linguicide groups often have no written record of their language nor any spoken record. What do such groups do? This is the case of the Pijao.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Design

To understand the dynamics of generational identity, change and language use; this study examined the opinions and experiences of 4 generations of Pijao collected in the municipality of Natagaima. Natagaima was chosen as, among the various municipalities of Tolima, it is probably the most famous for its reserves, is the most removed from the capital cities and was the centre of Pijao culture. In comparison to other methodological designs, it was decided that focus groups would offer the stronger approach as the group dynamic may provoke ideas and comments about the hypotheses that an interview or survey may not have produced. It was decided that each group would contain 6 people (3 men, 3 women) so that the groups were not too small as to provide a variety of answers but not too big as to make communication cumbersome. To get a grasp of generational differences since the linguicide, the generations were divided into the age groups 18-35, 36-50, 51-65, 65+. The generations were divided thus on the idea that the 65+ would have known of or had contact with the language speakers present in the 1950s, the 51-65 most likely wouldn't have had this contact and would be the first or second generation without the language. The generations that follow would never have had access to a fluent speaker or text.

With that decided, the hypothesis was broken into 15 themes within 3 basic groupings. The groupings and themes were:

1. Indigenous identity.
2. Language loss and identity.
3. Is having an indigenous language important to being indigenous?

These groupings were then broken down into 15 themes. The themes were:

1. Indigenous identity.
  - What does it mean for the group to be indigenous?*
  - What does it mean for other generations to be indigenous?*
  - What does it mean to be Pijao?*
  - What does it mean for the other generations to be Pijao?*
  - How have these definitions changed over time?*
2. Language loss and identity.
  - Is having an indigenous language important to being indigenous?*
  - Is having an indigenous language important for the other generations?*
  - How has language loss affected their identities as indigenous people?*
  - Would language recovery, if possible, be important?*
  - How would language recovery change indigenous identity?*
3. Current language usage.



*How do the Pijao, if at all, use language differently to other peoples?*

*What aspects do they foreground or background in their speech to show identity?*

*Are there any grammatical or pronunciation features that are unique to the group that set them apart as a people?*

*Are there any Pijao words being used in their Spanish?*

*How is language use different across the generations?*

These themes were then articulated into 38 cue questions which would be delivered during the focus groups which can be seen below.

*Theme 1: Indigenous Identity*

- ¿Qué significa ser indígena?
- ¿Qué significa ser Pijao?
- ¿Qué es único a los Pijao?
- ¿Cómo cree que las personas de generaciones (1-4) ven ser indígena?
- ¿Cómo se diferencia la identidad indígena a la identidad mestiza?
- ¿Cómo ven los mestizos a la indigenidad?
- ¿Ha cambiado esta opinión durante el tiempo?

*Theme 2: language loss*

- ¿Es tener una lengua nativa importante para ser indígena? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Es tener una lengua nativa importante para usted? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Cómo creen que son las opiniones de las otras generaciones acerca de tener una lengua nativa?
- Según tu comprensión, ¿cómo se perdió la lengua Pijao? ¿Quién era el responsable por su pérdida?
- ¿Cómo ha afectado la pérdida de la lengua Pijao a la comunidad Pijao
- ¿Cómo ha afectado la pérdida de la lengua Pijao a lo que significa ser Pijao?
- ¿Cómo ha afectado la pérdida de la lengua Pijao a usted y su identidad como persona indígena?
- ¿Cómo le hace sentir personalmente?
- Según su comprensión ¿cómo ha cambiado la vida Pijao desde el lingüicidio?
- ¿Cómo afectó la prohibición gubernamental de la lengua Pijao a las relaciones con el estado
- ¿Cómo afectó la prohibición gubernamental de la lengua Pijao a como usted ve al estado
- ¿Ha cambiado esto con el tiempo?
- ¿Si fuera posible recuperar la lengua Pijao, cuán importante consideraría usted hacerlo? ¿Por qué?
- Si se recuperara la lengua Pijao, ¿cómo cambiaría esto lo que significa ser Pijao?
- Si se recuperara la lengua Pijao, ¿quién o cuál grupo lo aprendería y usarla más?
- ¿Cómo ha afectado la pérdida de la lengua a las personas de generación (1-4)?
- ¿Cómo ha afectado la pérdida de la lengua a las relaciones con otros grupos indígenas?

*Theme 3: Current language use*

- ¿Puede usted identificar a un Pijao por la manera en que habla? ¿Cómo?
- ¿Qué es único en la manera en que hablan los Pijao?
- ¿Qué es único en la manera en que hablan los de su generación como Pijao?
- ¿Cree usted que los de generación (1-4) hablan de una manera diferente a usted? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Qué es único en cómo usted/su generación habla como Pijao?
- ¿Sabe o usa usted palabras Pijao en se español? ¿Cuáles?
- ¿Quién le enseñó estas palabras?
- ¿Con qué frecuencia usa estas palabras?
- ¿En cuáles situaciones o con quiénes usaría o no usaría usted estas palabras?

- ¿Cuál es la opinión del resguardo acerca de estas palabras?
- ¿Cuál es su opinión personal acerca de estas palabras?
- ¿Qué piensa generación X acerca de estas palabras?
- ¿Quién o cuál generación usa más estas palabras?

### 3.2 Recruiting

To recruit the participants, I first had to present the prospective project to the senior council of the *Consejo Regional de Indígenas del Tolima* (Regional Council of Indigenous Peoples of Tolima). Upon their approval of the project, a second meeting was made in Natagaima in the reserve of Anchique to explain the project to the leaders of the resguardos in the municipality of Natagaima and to ask them to provide volunteers for the different age groups. Given that I would be working with self-identified indigenes, I asked for no more criteria than resguardo membership and volunteering oneself. Once explained and volunteers obtained, dates were set for the different focus group. As it was election season it was impossible to get one location for all four focus groups but locations were found that were all conveniently located in or just outside the town of Natagaima. The dates and locations for the focus groups can be seen below in Table 1 below.

Date	Group	Location
July 6, 2015	65 +	Bateas
July 10, 2015	18 - 35	Anchique
July 11, 2015	51 - 65	Nanurco
July 11, 2015	36 - 50	Yaco Molana

Table 1: Focus group dates and locations.

### 3.3 Conducting the focus groups

The focus groups were conducted by meeting with the volunteers and first explaining the project to them. The participants were then given explanation and consent forms, and asked to read them carefully before signing the consent form which was returned to the researcher (in the case of being unable to read, the form was read to the participant). After answering any questions or doubts that the volunteers had, the conversations began. After turning on the voice recorder, the volunteers were steered into a group conversation about the 3 themes. Once the focus groups were conducted (each taking between 1.5 – 2.5 hours), the recordings were transcribed - changing all names for numbered codes and ensuring that the identities of the participants were protected. Two types of transcription were made - a technical transcription using the Du Bois convention at four levels of delicacy that would form the base for data manipulation and a simplified transcription which would be shown to the participants<sup>2</sup>. Once the transcriptions were complete, I then travelled again to Natagaima and showed a copy to the volunteers so that they could revise it and approve their continued participation.

<sup>2</sup> The Du Bois transcription convention is available at <http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/projects/transcription/A02bsymbols.pdf>.

### 3.4 Data Coding and Interpretation

Once permission was granted to continue using the transcriptions, the compiled Du Bois transcription was coded by hand. The coding itself was done using Grounded Theory. First the dialogue was broken into segments and then analysed from emergent themes. Codes for the themes were then created and categorised. Coded segments were then either compared, contrasted or linked to find the intra- and inter-generational patterns regarding indigeneity, language loss and identity, and current language use.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Pijao Identity

The focus groups provided some interesting insights into the nature of indigenous identity, indigenous identity maintenance and the role of these languages in the production of indigenous identity. The meaning of Pijao identity changed drastically over the course of four generational groups which can be observed in the self-perception as indigenous and a reduction of criteria for indigeneity since the disappearance of the Pijao language. While answers within the groups were not always unanimous, a clear trend appears - a trend that does not bode well for future generations of Pijao if action is not taken.

What it means to be Pijao as an identity has become progressively weaker and less strict since the linguicide. Members from all generations, including the youngest generation, acknowledged that the indigenous identity of the Pijao has become progressively less attached to ancestry and customs to the point where 'Pijao' has become not an indigenous marker but the demonym for anyone from Tolima. Younger generations even removed ethnicity and descent as a necessary condition and the youngest generation removed history and ritual as well.

The first step in the focus groups was to define indigenous identity and how it has changed in the Natagaima Pijao community. This concept was developed along two lines: what it means to be indigenous, and what it means to be Pijao; both of which produced similar results. The older generations (65+ years and 51-65 years) provided similar ideas of territory, descent, ethnicity, organization and the use of indigenous languages. Both produced a strong connection between the use of indigenous language and surnames and indigeneity.

*'Somos indios de la nación de nuestros padres. Bien viejos de apellido. Nosotros somos indios, propios indios. De los pasados y hemos organizado acciones como indígenas. Organizamos cosas como Pijaos, como la etnia Pijao'*

*'We are Indians of the nation of our fathers. Old in surname. We are Indians, real Indians. From the past ones and we have organized actions as indigenous persons. We organize things as Pijaos, as the Pijao ethnicity.'*

(Male, 65+ years)

The third generation (36-50) also gave a definition of indigeneity based on territory and cultural legacy. This group emphasized their ties to history and the need to recuperate ritual and rite within the community. The importance of language was absent though as this group focused on the importance of traditional medicine and cultural heritage. In contrast, the youngest generation gave only a very vague idea of the meaning of indigeneity. For this group, indigeneity means someone who lives on a reserve or is from Natagaima. No reference to ritual, heritage or language was made.

*'Para mí la cuestión indígena, el pueblo, el pueblo indígena es muy pegado al territorio. Cómo ahí nace uno, es necesario tener una organización una resistencia para que no acabe la tradición, lo justo, la tradición.'*

*'For me the indigenous question, the people, the indigenous people are very attached to territory. As one is born there, it is necessary to have an organization, a resistance so that tradition doesn't end, that which is just, tradition.'*

(Male, 36-50 years)

*'(ser indígena) Es como ya es un requisito del Tolima. Ósea, que uno pertenece a la región. Es como decir, los rolos<sup>3</sup> son rolos y nosotros de acá, somos de estos pueblos somos Pijaos.'*

*'(being indigenous) Is like a requisite now in Tolima. In other words, that one belongs to the region. That is to say, rolos are rolos and we from here, we from these towns are Pijaos.'*

(Male, 18-35 years)

The second line of questioning for indigenous identity was what it meant to be Pijao. The results were similar to the initial line of discussion, although the answers of the youngest group diverged. The eldest groups (65+ and 51-65) once again focused their discussion on ethnicity, surnames, conflict with the government for territory and the famous bellicosity of the group. The third generation focused on territory, belonging to the region and the absence of their language. The youngest generation contrasted with the other groups. This generation couldn't identify anything unique about being Pijao. For them, 'Pijao' was merely a requisite for being from Tolima and they extended the term to *everyone* from Tolima - be they indigenous or not. The youngest group even went as far to deny ethnicity and descent as a prerequisite: here the notion became weaker than any of the official or academic ideas of indigeneity

All groups were then asked what they believed the other generations thought about indigeneity. The two older generations, without disagreement, declared that younger generations were not interested in being indigenous as indigenous people are 'uncivilized' and 'ugly'.

*'Dicen los indios somos feos. Y que no nos, que no nos, mejor dicho – que no nos queremos civilizar. Entra ya con sus estudios, hay algunos no, no todos, que se avergüenzan de ser indios. De indio de ser indio, no soy indio y he escuchado varios chinos.'*

*'They say Indians are ugly. And that we, that we don't, indeed, that we don't want to civilize ourselves. They enter with their studies, there are some that no, not all, that are ashamed of being Indians. Of being Indian – I'm not an Indian! – and I have heard many young people.'*

(Female, 51-65 years)

Young people departing the reserves for the big cities and leaving the reserves with fewer people with which to create new generations is of particular worry to the older generations. Further complicating their

<sup>3</sup> Rolo is the colloquial demonym given to someone originating from the national capital Bogotá.

view of the Pijao youth, the three older generations all mentioned the rise of technology as an attraction that is taking the youth away from the reserves and into the cities.

*'Eh, de pronto ah, uno, uno, uno de los factores por el cual los jóvenes no están dentro del territorio es la cuestión de la tecnología. Los jóvenes quieren mucho a la tecnología y la tecnología ha cambiado mucho a la actitud de los jóvenes. Y por eso ahora buscan, buscan la ciudad.'*

*'Eh, maybe ah, one, one, one of the factors for which the young people are not inside the territory is the question of technology. Young people love technology a lot and technology has changed the attitude of young people a lot. And that's why they search out, search out the city.'*

(Female, 51-65 years)

The first topic within the theme of indigenous language and identity was the importance of having an indigenous language in order for the Pijao to be considered indigenous. The question to open the discussion was *'Is it important for an indigenous group to have an indigenous language?'* The results here also show a distinct progression throughout the generations. Every member of the 65+ and 51-65 focus groups emphatically answered 'yes' and then reiterated the importance of having a native language during the conversations that followed.

*'Claro que sí. Para hablar como Pijao.'*

*'Obviously yes. To speak like a Pijao'*

(Male, 65+ years)

*'Pues es una, es una cuestión de, es una cuestión de la identidad de nuestro pueblo. Si nosotros no perdiéramos nuestra lengua como tal, la lengua, nos vería de una forma diferente. Pero no lo tenemos y por eso, nos ven de otra manera.'*

*'Well it is a, it is a question of, a question of our people's identity. If we hadn't lost our language as such, the language, we would be seen differently. But we don't have it and that's why we are seen differently.'*

(Male, 51-65 years)

Members of the third generation expressed that not only that language was important, but that without language indigenous identity is incomplete. However not everyone agreed: one member of the group responded with an unsure no, however pressure within the group restricted further answering from her. While group pressure prevented further insight into this dissent, the expressing of this dissent would indicate that in this group the importance of language had begun to fade.

*'Si sacas una partecita, ya no somos completos. Los Pijaos somos indígenas, pero nos falta eso para ser completamente, netamente indígenas.'*

*'If you take out a small part, then we are not complete. The Pijaos are indigenous but we lack that (the Pijao language) to be completely, wholly indigenous.'*

(Male, 36-50 years)

*'Oh no.'*

(Female 36-50 years)

In fact, members of the third generation went as far to say that they had asked another indigenous group, the Nasa (referred to by their colloquial name the Páez) if they could use their language. Their request was denied as the Nasa hold their language as part of their unique identity and as something that cannot be shared. Thus, we see that those members of this generation who do believe in the importance of having a native language are willing to learn other Colombian languages to replace Spanish so that they can remain indigenous in the eyes of others.

*Nosotros de (OMITTED) si reunimos un conjunto de trabajo con el consejo para ver si no era posible recuperar la lengua, que nos acogeríamos un dialecto de otros que tenemos a nivel del departamento. Queríamos que el dialecto Páez, lo, lo, lo asumiéramos nosotros los Pijaos. Si somos capaces de aprender el inglés que nos imponen en las escuelas, hombre ¿cómo no vamos a ser capaces de aprender un dialecto que tenemos aquí en el mismo departamento? Eso fue una propuesta que estábamos mirando, pero al fin quedamos en unas conversaciones con los Páeces y estaban com que sí que no. Lo que pasa con ellos es la connotación religi-, la connotación espiritual que tiene ellos. Es que cada dialecto tiene una connotación espiritual.'*

*'We from (OMITTED) did form a working committee with the council to see if that it was not possible to recover the language, that we would take a dialect from another group that we have at departmental level. We wanted the Páez dialect, that, that, that we assume it as Pijaos. Si we are capable of learning English that is imposed at school, man – how are we not going to be capable of learning a dialect that we have here in the same department? It was a proposal that we were examining but at the end we agreed on conversations with the Páeces and they said yes and no. What happened is that with them, there is a relig... spiritual connotation that they have. Each dialect has a spiritual connotation.'*

(Female, 36-50 years)

After the fight to find an indigenous language in the third generation, a strong difference can be seen in the final generation. When asked the same question, the youngest group answered with straight nos. Language, they attested, was not a requisite for being indigenous. Though they stated that it would be nice to have a language of their own, it is not important to have one. This sharp decrease in the importance of language in those born at least 40 years after language death was predicted by those in older generations. The older generations had noted that younger generations were showing less and less interest in customs and most certainly in the language of their ethnicity and this was evident in the answers of the youth.

The groups were then asked whether language revitalization would be important and what effect language recovery would have on the Pijao nation. This line of questioning also showed differences in

generations. The older generations (65+, 51-65), without dissent, expressed that it was a necessity - that language recuperation should be a priority for the Pijao nation. However, they lamented the fact that they had no access to linguists or language professionals. The third generation opined that it should be done but doubted it would be possible to recover the language. Despite their doubts over the possibility of language recovery, this group expressed that should it be done as it would allow them to recover their identity as indigenous people:

*'Esto es lo que tenemos que aprender porque ya nos lo han quitado una vez. Nos quitaron la lengua, nos quitaron el dialecto hasta que nos quedamos con nada.'*

*'This is what we have to learn because that have already taken it from us once. They took our language, they took our dialect and we were left with nothing.'*

(Male, 65+ years)

*'Sería importante porque ya nosotros no usaríamos el español. Ya se dedica a los nativos. A recuperar toda la parte cultural y enseñar a nuestros hijos y a todos que vienen cómo es que se tiene que comportar con el dialecto Pijao.'*

*'It would be important because we wouldn't use Spanish. We would dedicate ourselves to the natives. To recover the cultural part and teach our children and all that come how one must act with the Pijao dialect.'*

(Male, 51-65 years)

*'Recuperaría la identidad, que lo más básico en el resguardo. Qué es recuperar la identidad como cabildo, como resguardo, como lo que nos identifica como indígena.'*

*'It would recover identity, which is the most basic part of the reserve. Which means recovering identity as a council, as how we identify ourselves as indigenous.'*

(Female, 36-50 years)

The generational trend continued into the youngest group who did not show the same fervour for language restoration as the older groups and just responded that it would be a good idea. One member of this group did, however, remark that language loss is responsible for the loss of customs among the Pijao and may be behind the decay of indigeneity.

*'De pronto ha ido perdiendo las costumbres por no poder hablar esa lengua.'*

*'Perhaps we have been losing our customs because we can't speak that language.'*

(Female, 18-35 years)

The desire to recover an indigenous language is deeply entrenched in the idea that indigenous language is a strong part of being indigenous and is supported how the language loss made them feel as a people and personally. While the youngest group felt no impact from language loss (this correlates to their neutral attitude regarding language revitalization), the other three generations felt strong (though different) emotions to language loss. The oldest generation held themselves partly responsible for the loss as, even

though language transmission was illegal, they did not learn what they could have from their parents and grandparents. This created a sense of guilt in that they had not rescued the language when they could have done so.

The shame felt by many participants was also mentioned in relation to dealing with other groups; and this ties into the last question about language loss and identity —how had language loss affected their relations with other indigenous groups. All generations said the same thing: without a language of their own they felt ashamed and at a social disadvantage when dealing with other indigenous groups. All groups affirmed that when dealing with other groups they were seen negatively and that some groups (particularly the U'wa) refused to regard the Pijao as indigenous as they lacked a language of their own. This indicates that at least a national level, indigenous people are expected to speak an indigenous language for them to be so.

*'... en la parte de la comunicación. Uno va a otros sitios y no hablamos la lengua y estamos en desventaja.'*

*'... in the part of communication. One does to other places and we don't speak the language and we are at a disadvantage.'*

(Female 18 – 35 years.)

*'Cuando he estado en capacitaciones con otros departamentos. Ellos si hablan la lengua. Y yo nada que hablo porque no lo conozco. Entonces si me ha afectado eso. Es como en una reunión en el Cauca. Estaban los Páeces, los Inga, los Embera-Chami, los Wayuu, los Embera-Kativa y ellos si hablan la lengua. Y yo como representante del municipio no... y eso me hizo sentir mal.'*

*'When I have been in training in other departments. They do speak the language. And I can't speak at all as I don't know how. So it has affected me. It's like in a meeting in Cauca. The Páez, the Inga, the Embera-Chami, the Wayuu, the Embera-Kativa were all there and they do speak their language. And I as the representative of the municipality don't... and that made me feel bad.'*

(Female, 36 - 50 years)

*'Debido a la pérdida de la lengua, los otros, los otros grupos no nos identifican como indígenas. Por ejemplo, nuestros compañeros de la Sierra Nevada dicen que nosotros los Pijaos no somos indígenas. Por la forma en que no tenemos una lengua... Por eso, ellos dicen que el pueblo, que nosotros los Pijaos no somos indígenas.'*

*'Owing to the loss of the language, the others, the other groups don't identify us as indigenous. For example, our companions in the Sierra Nevada say that we the Pijao are not indigenous. By means in that we don't have a language... For that, they say that the people, that we the Pijao are not indigenous.'*

(Male, 51 – 65 years.)

*'Es cierto, de pronto. Ellos son esquivos con la lengua de ellos. Ellos tienen una herencia y nosotros no'.*

*'It's true, maybe. They are tricky with their language. They have a heritage and we don't.'*



(Male, 65 + years.)

As seen in the interactions of the Pijao with other indigenous groups from around Colombia, language among other indigenous peoples in Colombia is an important part of their identities as indigenous peoples. A member of the 51-65 generation who had had substantial contact with the indigenous group the Nasa attested that this group was deeply protective of its language and of who uses it as. Another participant, this time from the 36 - 50 group, also claimed a long history of working with the Nasa and was part of the group that sought to ‘borrow’ the Nasa language (Nasa Yuwe) for use by the Pijao. The Nasa, according to the negotiations over language use, regard their language as an important part of their social identity and have given religious significance to their language. This experience was repeated by those who had had dealings with the Wayuu, the Arhuacos, the Embera Chami and the U’wa. Each of these groups, in their dealings with the Pijao, had made it quite clear that their language was an integral part of their indigeneity. What’s more they made it clear (especially clear in the case of the U’wa) that without an indigenous language, the Pijao are not to be considered indigenous and that many are considered to be pretending to be indigenous to gain benefits from the government.

*‘Yo fui y los que fuimos ahí, fuimos como cuatro personas, y ahí el compañero me dijo ‘tú no eres indígena. Usted sí y usted sí’ pero a mí no. Y yo pregunté por qué y me dijo ‘tú eres blanca.’*

*‘I went and those that went, we were four people, and there the companion said to me ‘you are not indigenous. You yes and you yes’ but not to me. And I asked why and he said to me ‘you are white’.*

(Female, 36-50 years)

## 4.2 Current Language Use

*‘Y llegó y habló con uno como... indio. Llega dice a uno ‘hermano, compañero’ y ósea uno como ‘¿y este señor qué?’ Pero entendemos que en su tiempo era así. Así en su manera se entiende que son así, indígenas.’*

*‘And (he) arrives and spoke with one like ... an Indian. (He) arrives and says to one ‘brother, companion’ and one is like ‘And what’s up with this man?’ But we understand that in his time it was like that. That was their way of understanding that they are like that, indigenous.’*

(Female participant, 18-35 years)

The final section of the focus group interviews touched upon current language use and how the Pijao use the colonist language to establish an indigenous identity. All groups openly said that Pijao speak differently from surrounding settlements, that all generations spoke a distinct variety of Spanish and that they could easily identify a Pijao by the way they spoke. In terms of how Pijaos speak differently, 3 themes emerged: sociophonetics, address terms and Pijao words (discussed in the section 4.3).

In regards to the information presented in this section, there exists no satisfactory and scientific study of regional Colombian Spanish done in recent years. The last dialectological work done was the ‘*Atlas Lingüístico y Etnográfico de Colombia*’ (ALEC) published in 1983. While a significant work in itself, the ALEC does not offer the precision needed to frame local dialects and much less sociolects or ethnolects.

The ALEC is focused more on lexical variation than on phonology, and the phonology present is presented in an almost haphazard manner thus rendering it not that useful. The information that is present was gathered from rural folk and was not organised along social class or ethnicity meaning it is not useful for sorting people uniqueness from local mestizo speech. As such, the information presented will be presented as the observations of the author and the accounts of the participants.

The first point of difference mentioned by the Pijao was that of address terms and a clear difference between Pijao Spanish and other local variants in their use. All generations remarked that the Pijao speak to each other differently than they do to non-Pijaos and that this difference in address terms is used to mark indigeneity. Among themselves, the Pijao address each other as partner/mate (*compañero, compañera*) or brother/sister (*hermano, hermana*) while outsiders are addressed as per standard Spanish with *señor, señora*, etc. Interestingly, the final generation recognized the use of address terms but never used them as they felt that they were archaic and thus show a rejection of traditional indigenous identity.

According to the participants, the Pijao accent and pronunciation are different to the accents in the nearby mestizo settlements which speak a dialect of Spanish from Tolima and Huila known as ‘*Opita*’. The participants made three observations regarding their speech when compared to the local mestizo variants. These observations were:

- No final [s] elision.
- Different vowel length. Pijao vowels are longer than non-indigenous local variants.
- Different accent. Pijao accent is for ‘forced’.

In terms of the elision of the final coda [s], this seems to be the case<sup>4</sup>. While *Opita* is relatively famous for the elision of the final [s] from their words, the Pijao from Natagaima do not present this phenomenon. Below are examples of Natagaima Pijao Spanish compared with *Opita* words heard by the researcher in Natagaima.

Word	Gloss	Opita	Natagaima Pijao
Jóvenes	Young people	[ˈhoβene]	[ˈhoβenes]
Personas	People	[perˈsona]	[perˈsonas]
Militares	Soldiers	[miliˈtare]	[miliˈtares]

Table 3: Comparison of *Opita* and Natagaima Pijao Spanish in terms of final coda elisión.

As for vowel length, the observation made by the Pijao also seems to be correct. There is a difference in vowel length among the Pijao of Natagaima and the non-indigenous members of the community. However, careful analysis of the recordings revealed that in Natagaima at least, the difference in vowel length is not found in every vowel but in the final vowel of words that contain two or more syllables. In vowels that are lengthened, the length on average is doubled. See below for examples taken from the interviews:

Word	Gloss	Opita	Natagaima Pijao
Carro	Car	[ˈkaro]	[ˈkaro:]
Gente	People	[ˈhente]	[ˈhente:]
Indio	Indian	[ˈind̪i.o]	[ˈind̪i.o:]

Table 4: Comparison of *Opita* and Natagaima Pijao Spanish in terms of syllable length.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that this elision only occurs on the final coda. Other varieties of Spanish (e.g. ‘Costeño’ Colombian Spanish) present this elision on all coda, however in *Opita* this is only seen in the final [s] of a word.

The final point made by the Pijao ‘Different accent’ can be broken down into two pieces: debuccalization and tonality. While Opita experiences conditional allophony of [s] which changes the [s] to a [x] in front of [e] and [i], the Pijao do not. What the Pijao do is that they debuccalise the [s] into [h] in front of [e] (but not [i]). Thus, Opita and Pijao Spanish present two different conditional allophony rules:

- (1) Opita: /s/ → [x] / #\_ [i, e]  
[s] / elsewhere
- (2) Pijao: /s/ → [h] / #\_ [e]  
[s] / elsewhere

Examples taken from the focus groups and interaction with Opita speakers (by the author) are shown below with Standard Colombian Spanish (from the capital, Bogotá and most central Colombian cities) for reference:

Word	Gloss	Standard Colombian	Opita	Natagaima Pijao
Señor	Mister/man	[ˈseɲor]	[ˈxeɲor]	[ˈheɲo:r]
Sesenta	Sixty	[seˈsent̪a]	[xeˈxent̪a]	[heˈhent̪a:]
Sí	Yes	[si]	[xi]	[si]

Table 5: Comparison of Standard Colombian, Opita and Natagaima Pijao Spanish in terms of phonology.

As mentioned above, there is a second aspect to the observation made about accent and that is tonality. During the focus groups, all of the groups made reference to the ‘cantado’ (sung) nature of the Opita accent and noted that in the Pijao it was stronger. The *cantado* refers to the tonality placed on the last word in Opita. The tonality depends on the number of syllables in the final word in a clause. In Opita, in single syllable final words, there is a slight rising contour tone on the vowel and in words with two or more syllables, there is a half-fall on the penultimate nucleus, followed by a half rise on the final nucleus. However, as mentioned by the focus groups, Pijao intonation is somewhat stronger. Instead of using half-falls and rises, Pijao uses a complete fall and rise. This stronger *cantado* is what gives the ‘forced’ sound mentioned in the focus groups. Examples:

Word	Gloss	Standard Colombian	Opita	Natagaima Pijao
Señor	Mister/man	[ˈseɲor]	[ˈxɛnór]	[ˈhɛnó:r]
Sesenta	Sixty	[seˈsent̪a]	[xeˈxɛnt̪á]	[heˈhɛnt̪á:]
Sí	Yes	[si]	[xĩ]	[sĩ]

Table 6: Comparison of Standard Colombian, Opita and Natagaima Pijao Spanish in terms of tonality.

### 4.3 Pijao Word Use and List

The final theme that came out in the discussions about modern language use is the usage of Pijao words in Spanish. The oldest three generations remarked that they all used Pijao words in their everyday Spanish - in particular family terms (*guambito/a* for children) and certain household items (e.g. *johoi* - cigarette). They also stated that the older members of their group actually knew a lot of Pijao words but were extremely careful to only use those words among family members. It was also noted that these members of the group weren’t passing on this knowledge as they felt a sense of shame when using the words. We see evidence of this in the answers of the youth. The youngest generation only knew two words that they could

identify as being Pijao and that was only because they had heard them used the week before - evincing a marked difference between generations in the importance of Pijao language and words.

On the following page is the list of Pijao words retrieved from the participants (many had come prepared with lists) and an explanation of the orthographic convention used to write Pijao. While it would have been convenient to have Pijao use the Spanish writing system (as Ramírez Sendoya did in 1952), Pijao contains sounds not found in Colombian Spanish. Being so, the words here are presented using an orthographic system that was developed in dialogue with the community. It is based on, but not identical, to the system used by Durbin and Seijas (1973) with diacritics representing stress.

Grapheme	Phoneme	Grapheme	Phoneme	Grapheme	Phoneme
a	a	k	k	t	tʃ
b	b	l	l	u	u
d	d	m	m	v	v
e	e	n	n	x	x
f	f	ñ	ɲ	y	j
g	g	o	o	z	z
h	h	p	p	ç	tʃ
i	i	r	r	š	ʃ
j	dʒ	s	s	‘	?

Table 7: Orthographic system used for writing Pijao.

### Pijao Word List

a'bati - make chicha	apahi - moustache
açu - grinding stone	atekora - head
ako - agouti paca (tapir)	atenkora - head
alahi - cast net	atiesia - large star
alamán - caiman	atiesiax - stars
alpiçi - to smell	auyama - pumpkin
ambuke - acacia flexuosa	aveki - to speak
amé - tree	balay - straw basket
amihi - to sleep	balonki - to dance
anaka - cow	batea - wooden cup
anea - tear, rip	behuko - guaco tree
angola - grandmother	biha - dye from the bixa orellana
angolax - goddess	bihao - heliconia bihai
anigo - navel	bonçe - large tapir
ano - far away	budukue - a type of bird
anonhina - hoop earring	bukuru - witch (male)
anosia - cloud	çaguála - canoe
anoxo - no	çain - salt
anoxox - no	çambike - throwing of a net
antene - magdalena river	çéçira - pig
anumo - totumo	çibiló - wrapped corn
anyimo - angry	çikuna - fan (for fires)

çilgua - promotion, deal	janguma - palm of the hand
çimbiki - carate (illness)	jaguané - jaguar
çirgua - bag	johoi - cigarette
çirix - cold	kabuya - Agave americana
çú - day	kaginga - stirrer
çoki - buttock	kahírre - dog
çurukí - devil	kaike - greeting
dukuara - Melicoccus bijugatus (Spanish lime)	karingunye - namesake
dulima - goddess of chastity and virginity	kaxe - planting, field
eliani - god of good things and dreams	kaxiol – caiman
elache - caiman eme - brother enu - close	kien - right
enyum - good	kienán - to walk
eo - exclamation of admiration	kimba - sandal
erame - sister	kinke - chest
eraname - chief	kinkumb - to sing
g gaça - hook	kitixuín - a type of bird
genluse - large bag	ko - god of water and hunting
golúpa - cassava	koitupuro - god of chicha and parties
guaçimyú - come!	koni minto - heart
guambito - small boy, lad	kopaiba - copaiba officinalis
guanabua - breasts of an old woman	kunki - to hear
guarko - trench	kunox - heat
guarnix - mother	lambari - to look
guayaba - psidium guajava (guava)	lankí - drum
guiça - stop	lapora - butterfly
gumal - guarapo (fermented drink)	lokíd - goodbye
hedome - sickness	Lulumoi - god of justice, justice (in general)
henae - fly (animal)	lun - eye
hene - ugly	lungo - work wage
hepoto - to spit	lurko - without one ear
hinio - cold	magei - a species of tapir
hini - yes	maleki - maraca
hinix - yes	manai - good morning
hişx - greeting	manpana - mother of water
hoke - mountain	mapa - bear (animal)
hoki hoki kokoere - cohabitante	mapure - rabbit
homero - bow (weapon)	margure - woman
hoté - star	margurex - woman
huíl - sun	mena - remedy
huil - light	missingo - cat
huilx - light	mohán - traditional doctor
ibamaka - creator goddess of men and women	mujarko - beautiful
ibanazka - goddess of storms	naçinkima - devil
ima - earth	nançea - to swim
imeli - witch (male)	nanukuko - creator god
ina - chicha	nañanua - running water
inerino - gold	nasés - house
irko - water	nedessa - nose ring

neento - quiver	surumba - water with cane sugar
nelí - arrow	suzunga - strainer made from totumo
nikari - to fish	ta - sun god
noga - stomach	taiba - moon goddess
nómade - to smoke	taíse - shirt
nuhúgi - woman, flame	taita - grandfather, wise man
numbana - moon	taitapuro - god of fire and darkness
núna - moon	tan - stick
nuni - fingernail	tána - water
ñama - hand	tápe - stone
ñime - child	tatakoa - grandfather ofsnakes
oçun - god of love and death	tenú - tobacco
odeo - burn	tiké - plum tree
oléma - ear	tínki - tooth
oleno - ear	tole - cemetery
oliga - knee	toléma - snake
omáfaki - leaf	toli - mist, fog
onerex - man	toni – paddle
onía - today	túí - good, that's fine!
onto - red	túngama - turtle, tortoise
orái - red	u uanaba - soursop
orema - man	umea - flame
óreme - man	ueño - grandfather ueñox - god
p pakandé - home of the gods	unkine - chick
pegil - foot, leg	upke - a little
pepinkí - breasts of a young woman	wuaipax - town
pipiolox - child	wuipa - girl
Poirá - demi-god	zaponuko – son of a whore
sumén - to drink	

#### 4.4 Pijao Linguicide

This final section of the results looks at how the Pijao language was lost, but in the experiences of the Natagaima Pijao community. This is important to examine as, until the moment, the loss of the Pijao language has been simply quoted as the result of legislation at the time. However, given that other languages survived this legislation, it is important to analyse the Pijao case of complete language death. The participants in the older groups all attested to governmental harassment when using the language several years ago. The oldest members of the groups reported that the armed forces would arrive at the reserves and if anyone was heard speaking the language, then there would be dire repercussions. As noted by the participants:

*'Mis papas me dijeron que no podían hablar la lengua. Que tenían que hablar en reuniones secretas por las noches, y aun así llegaba el ejército.'*

*'My parents told me that they couldn't speak the language. That they had to speak at secret meetings at night, and even then the army would come.'*

(Male participant, 50-65 years)

*'No (0.5) lo podías hablar. Te castigaban. Hasta murieron personas.'*

*'No (0.5) you couldn't speak it. They would punish you. People even died.'*

(Female participant, 65+ years)

From these quotes, we can understand that the reserves themselves were not safe houses for the indigenous communities and there is actually some legal reasoning behind this. While the reserves have been relatively autonomous in their punishment systems, they have never been exempt from the Constitution and linguistic laws. The Pijao noted that the language was used in secret nocturnal meetings, but eventually these meetings were exposed and dealt with by the government. The lands they inhabited and administered were still policed by the government. This leads to an unsettling inference: the creation of the reserves at a time prior to modern linguistic legislation hastened the demise of the language.

Prior to 1991, as mentioned earlier, speaking an indigenous language was prohibited in all but the most remotest areas of the country. Tolima, by being in the centre of the country, is by no means remote and while it does have mountains and forests, it is largely a valley with either arid or fertile plains. This means that the Pijao could never have been regarded as residing in a remote section of the country, thus they were never exempt from the reigning linguistic legislation of the era. The reserves of Pijao were first conceded in the river plains near Ortega, Coyaima and Natagaima far from the Andes and the forests near the Andean foothills. This gave the Pijao a linguistic disadvantage as they could not claim remoteness and were thus under the constant eye of religious and military authorities. This was noted by the Pijao who mentioned:

*'Los otros grupos pudieron esconder, escabullirse. Tenían montañas (0.5) bosques (0.2) donde esconderse. ¿Y nosotros? Nosotros siempre estábamos ahí, ahí en la vista del gobierno. No pudimos huir. No pudimos esconder. Nuestros territorios siempre estaban muy visibles.'*

*'The other groups could hide, run away. They had mountains (0.5) forest (0.2) a place to hide. And us? We were always here, here in the sight of the government. We couldn't run. We couldn't hide. Our territories were always very visible.'*

(Male participant, 50-65 years)

According to the Pijao, while the few other groups who claimed reserves shortly after the Pijao could use their respective languages, these groups had the advantage of terrain (forests, mountain, sheer distance from large mestizo settlements) that permitted remoteness – a luxury not afforded to the Pijao. It would appear that the reserves gave territory back to the Pijao, but by being government recognised extensions they were under the ever-vigilant eyes of the authorities and this hastened the loss of the Pijao language. Through the accounts of the Pijao, it seems that the government achieved the final linguicide of the Pijao through the very territories ceded to them.

## 5. Discussion

As was seen in the results, Pijao identity has become weaker and more flexible since the death of the language and it would seem that the Pijao Linguicide played an important role in this process. To remove the doubt of modernization or technology that one participant had suggested, it is necessary to show evidence of indigenous peoples in Colombia, who having undergone or embraced modernization, have maintained traditional language and identity. Modernization and language retention can be evidenced in

the case of the Inga, the Kichwas, the Nasa, the Nonuyo, the Muiscas and the Arhuaco. The Inga and Kichwas are indigenous peoples who have migrated north into major metropolitan areas and work mainly in street commerce and clothing manufacture. While both groups live in capital cities, they actively maintain traditional social structures, belief systems and their respective languages. Studies (Valencia Galvis, 2012; Pineda-Camacho, 2005) attest to language being a major factor in the maintenance of their identities as indigenous peoples of Colombia while both groups have adapted to modernization and technology. The Nasa have not only adapted to modernization and technology but have rewritten their alphabet to better suit modern technology, thus providing another argument against modernization per se leading to language loss and weakening identity (Corrales Carvajal, 2008). The same goes for the Nonuyo from the south of Colombia; who, after being reduced to one speaker, revitalized their language, adapted the language to modernization and still remain faithful to their identities as indigenous peoples (Echeverri & Landaburu, 1995).

Given that modernization and technology are not the roots of the weakening of indigenous identity, what is? Realistically, there will be many factors. However, as pointed out by the Pijao of Natagaima, language loss has been an important factor and from the moment the Pijao language died, the Pijao began to lose a vital (and perhaps the most visible) tool for being othered available to them. The prohibition of the Pijao language caused an immediate start to the loss of cultural knowledge and identity. As the older Pijao stated, the geography of the Magdalena valley meant the Pijao of Natagaima could not evade the law as they were situated between military bases and two mayor cities (Ibagué and Neiva). As such, the Pijao had no place to escape to, and continued open conflict would have had worse results than just language death. In order to remain with their lands, the Pijao had to accept the death of their language i.e. linguicide. While current generations put the blame for language loss on the shame felt by the few elderly Pijao that *may* know *something* of language, the reality is somewhat more complex. This shame felt by older community members in regard to their language was acknowledged by all of the generations in the study as being partly responsible for the non-transmission of the language to younger generations today and it is these younger generations that have been unable to be othered as indigenous peoples. However as noted by the oldest generation, the real transmission of the language stopped when the reserves were founded and authorities could legitimately erase the language. The oldest generation noted violence and coercion against the Pijao community in regards to their language and it is the memory of this governmental violence against the Pijao that may be real reason behind the ‘the shame’ felt by the community elders. That shame may be the echo of governmental violence against the Pijao performed in the youth of today’s elders.

While the use of Pijao words has diminished to the point where young people barely know and use them, the group does retain an accent which may be unique to them. However, in Colombia the Spanish accent changes in every region and this may not be enough to differentiate the group outside of the region they live in. This itself seems to be a factor in the eventual weakening of indigenous identity. The fact that the Pijao ethnolect is not immediately recognizable as different by other indigenous communities or even mestizo from other regions, the Pijao cannot be immediately othered as indigenous. From the experiences of the Pijao community in Natagaima, there seems to be a correlation between the ease of being othered linguistically, and the adherence to indigenous traditions. The older Pijao noted that they spoke more ‘indigenous’ than the youth and this means that they are more easily othered than the youth. The youth, who only identify themselves as weakly different to their surrounding mestizo communities, this does correlate to weaker ties with traditional indigenous identities. For the youth, indigeneity become not the adherence to rites and traditions but to territory. However, it must be noted that this territory includes mestizos and thus mestizos are subsumed into Pijao-ness. It was pointed out by the older generations (and indeed the observation holds) that if the Pijao still had their own language, this would not occur as the Pijao would linguistically other the mestizos. The immediately obvious linguistic difference between the Pijao and other non-Pijao groups, would result in strong indigenous identities as the linguistic difference would reinforce the perception of cultural differences and, as a result, the youth would have stronger indigenous identities (and thus not include all of Tolima in the term ‘Pijao’).



As noted in the opinions of the Pijao and the other indigenous groups encountered by the Pijao, there is a certain degree of essentialism in the collective imagination of the indigenous in Colombia in terms of language and indigeneity. The Nasa regard their language as having religious importance, the U'wa consider all Spanish speakers to be 'white' and the older of the Pijao consider themselves incomplete without their ancestral language. While there is dissent among the Pijao regarding the exact relationship between language and indigenous identity, there is an overall trend for essentialism in the generations closer to the linguicide. It may be the case that the younger generations have become less essentialist as a result of not linguistically differentiating themselves from the local mestizo population. Indeed, the non-essentialist member of the third generation was someone who did not have contact with members of other communities. Thus, it may be that essentialism in the context of language and indigenous language is the result of contact where difference is needed and expressed through having a different language.

This thus leads to the theoretical basis of linguicide. We appear to instinctively understand that language is a key part of forming social identities where difference is essential. Governments use this understanding to manipulate language policy in order to manipulate the social identities available to the populace. Indigenous identity is a social identity - it only exists as a group identity and in relation to other identities (in this case mestizo and colonist). This is what governments seek to control or eliminate with language policies. In the case of linguicide, a government removes the ability of a group of people to other or be othered, and to foreground or background similarities and/or differences with other groups. For indigenous groups, there is often an essentialist relationship to language and identity. For groups in essentialist societies, this means their ultimate destruction as a unique group if they do not find another way of linguistically differentiating themselves. This is the case of the Pijao. The 1886 constitution declared indigenous languages to be uncivilized and this opinion was then furthered in Law 89 of 1890 which put the elimination of indigenous languages into religious hands in an effort to 'civilize' the country. These laws together with the newly formed reserves put the indigenous in a situation where they couldn't escape the eyes of the government and the mandated elimination of indigenous languages. In the reserves close to mestizo settlements and with their language eliminated shortly after the creation of the reserves, the Pijao were eventually assumed to be extinct by the rest of the country as they could not be differentiated from their mestizo neighbours. Thus, the Colombian government had succeeded in its aim, it had created the perception of one identity through the unification of language (and elimination of another).

This is not to say however that the Pijao people have lost or will lose their identity completely. While the identity of the youngest generation as an indigenous people is weak, the Pijaos themselves have observed that there are actions which will help them maintain their indigenous identity in the future. These actions are based on language and have been noted in numerous communities with endangered (but not dead) languages around the world. A member of the fourth and youngest generation (18-35 years) noted that for their ethnolect to survive (even without Pijao words) a positive attitude is required so that parents and grandparents are willing to teach their children and that their children are open to learning. The third generation noted that the situation was indeed precarious and feared for the future of the reserves. It was observed that the future of the Pijao identity was directly linked to education and that the community required an education strategy that respected the Pijao ethnolect. This requires Pijao words be on par with Spanish words in terms of prestige - a view reflected in the revitalization efforts of other Amerindian groups e.g. the Apache, Ojibwe and Diné (Reyhner, 2010). The final two generations, while aiming for language revitalization, would settle for a stronger ethnolect in Spanish with more Pijao words catalogued and inserted into Spanish. This would create a truly unique variety of Spanish that would be sufficiently different as to warrant easy differentiation from other Spanish varieties. Thus the Pijao people (at least in Natagaima), while having lost their language, recognize the need to use linguistic means to maintain (if not recover) their identity as an indigenous people.

This study does have its limitations. First, the relatively small size of the samples (24 in total) means that the views provided may not be representative of the entire Pijao population in Natagaima without follow up to ensure representativeness in the community. However, in further field work done in Natagaima and

Coyaima since the focus groups, the same opinions and concerns have been heard time and again. This would indicate that while the small size was a limitation, it may have indeed been representative of the population. Similarly, while it could be shown that Pijaos actively differentiate themselves from others by placing an importance on specific address terms when speaking to each other and their unique accent, the question of the accent that they profess provides a problem. Colombian Spanish is renowned for the amazing variation it displays in dialect and pronunciation and regional accents and dialects are often used to clearly mark identity. The Pijao of Natagaima attested using a variation in accent to differentiate between indigenes and non-indigenes, however given the lack of recent reliable studies into the phonological and morphological variation of Colombian Spanish varieties outside of the major capital cities, a true distinction between 'Pijao Spanish' and Tolimense-Huiliense has yet to be proven. Until such time as reliable phonological and morphological data are available, the existence of a Pijao accent will remain an interesting question awaiting investigation<sup>5</sup>.

## 6. Conclusion

The relationship between indigeneity and identity is complex. Without an indigenous language, the Pijao of Natagaima are still able to identify themselves as indigenous but it would appear that this indigenous identity is in danger. The Pijao exist in a country where native languages are on the rise and taking back their place in society. This means that for the Pijao, the topic of having an indigenous language is an important point in the negotiation of their identities as an indigenous people. In Colombia, there is an essentialist attitude regarding indigenous language and indigeneity, and whether it is correct or not, it has placed the Pijao at a considerable disadvantage when in contact with other indigenous groups and mestizos. The lack of an obvious linguistic difference means that many other ethnicities regard them as mestizos, ignoring their cultural practices and semi-autonomous territories.

Indigeneity is not a fixed category of identity. The way it is applied to others and to oneself varies and no one set of criteria can determine indigeneity. Even within a single ethnicity, for example the Pijao, different criteria exist. This study showed that having an indigenous language is important for maintaining an identity as an indigenous person in Colombia. Over the generations that have occurred since the Pijao language was last heard, Pijao indigeneity has undergone marked changes - changes that can be understood via identity theory and the process of othering. The loss of the Pijao language meant that identity began to weaken as the group lost the ability to use language to other and be othered. This got to the point where most of the country now believe the group to be extinct and internal indigenous identity is weakening over time. From the experiences of the Natagaima Pijao with other indigenous groups and their own weakening concepts of indigeneity, it can be seen that language is a vital part of being othered. Being othered is essential to maintaining the self-image, the othered image, the relational opposition to mainstream society and the historical shared memory necessary to identify as an indigenous person. It is the ability to be othered that was affected by the Pijao linguicide.

Since the linguicide committed by the Colombian government, the Natagaima Pijao have suffered enormously. The group has been accused by other indigenous groups of being pretenders to indigeneity on the grounds of not having a language of their own. Mainstream Colombian society has erroneously consigned the nation to the history books as an extinct on the basis that the language has not been heard in such a long time. Finally, the Colombian government and its agencies have refused to acknowledge the Pijao nation on many occasions on the same grounds. The aim of linguicide is to eradicate social identities via language and the Colombian government's linguicide of the Pijao almost achieved just that via the weakening of the indigeneity of the Pijao Nation. However, the famously aggressive Pijao Nation has not disappeared and are taking steps to make sure they never disappear. While this investigation is ongoing

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<sup>5</sup> This study is currently under way at the time of publication.

and part of a wider Pijao language project, the results of the initial phase of this study are already being incorporated in the community. The results showing the perceived link between language and indigeneity have been shared with the community. Actions are being taken to put the Pijao words into greater circulation and to perform a wider sociophonetic study of the Pijao in all the south of Tolima with the purpose of strengthening their ethnolect. It is hoped that this will make them more salient as a group both regionally and nationally, and strengthen their position as an indigenous group among their peers.

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