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REVIEWS

Patience Epps and Lev Michael (eds.). 2023. *Amazonian languages; Language isolates I: Aikanã to Kandozi-Chapra* (pp. i-lxi, 1-657 + “Index” [24 pp. not numbered]); *II: Kanoé to Yurakaré* (pp. i-xiii, 659-1352 + “Index” [26 pp. not numbered]); *An international handbook* (Handbooks of Linguistics and Communication Science // Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft (HSK) series, vols. 44.1-2 of HSK 44). Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter Mouton

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*The Amazon basin is the least known
and least understood linguistic region in the world.*

The above motto is the very first (save xxviii pp. of the front matter) sentence of Dixon and Aikhenveld 1999 (:1), a book which on its very first page ([i]) states that “The Amazon basin is arguably both the least-known and the most complex linguistic region in the world today”, reiterating it on the fourth (back) cover of the edition (“Paperback Re-issue”) at this writer’s hand. Discussing reasons for such a “state of the art”, the editors point, among others, to the fact that “[...] the standard of scholarship in South American linguistics is not high” [...] but they “[...] must add that there are notable exceptions [...] – a number of descriptive studies that achieve a high standard of clarity and explanation” and refer in that context specifically to the *Handbook of Amazonian languages* (Derbyshire & Pullum) evaluating it to be “a most worthwhile enterprise [...] so far [...]” (*ib.*, p. 3).

The appearance of Derbyshire & Pullum’s first volume of their *Handbook* in 1986 aroused immediate interest of the editors of *Lingua Posnaniensis* (LPoS) evidently aware of the situation in South American linguistic research as described by Dixon and Aikhenveld and quoted above, and a review of the volume was commissioned just after its

release in print. Submitted to the editorial board for publication in 1987¹, due to an unfavorable coincidence of undesirable circumstances it could see the light of the day only over three years later (LPos 31 (1990), 120-2). Derbyshire & Pullum's *Handbook* was initially planned as a series of three volumes (1986: v) and a review of both volumes 2 (1990) and 3 (1991), also commissioned by LPos, was published in 1992 in a newly established journal (LOS 1, 236-8)².

Derbyshire & Pullum 1986 (xiii + 642pp.) includes, apart from "Introduction" and "Part II: Word order and typological studies", "Grammatical sketches" of four languages: Apalai (pp. 33-127), Canela-Krahô (128-99), Pirahã (200-325), and Urubu-Kaapor (326-403). In Derbyshire & Pullum 1990 (x + 474) one finds two such sketches (in fact, pretty extensive grammars) of Sanuma (15-248) and Yagua (249-474), and in Derbyshire & Pullum 1991 (xii + 517) – also two "sketches" of Macushi (23-160) and Paumari (161-352) alongside with "A classification of Maipuran (Arawakan) languages" and a "Cumulative index to volumes 1-3"³.

The names of the editors of the 1986ff. *Handbook...* – Derbyshire (1924-2007) and Pullum (born 1945) – appear in literature frequently in pair (side by side) and, surprisingly for many to learn, it was the latter, a linguist specializing in general linguistics and research focusing on the... English language, who actually made the former, an accountant-incidentally-turned-SIL-worker among Hixkaryána Indians in northern Brazil⁴, an academic linguist specializing in Carib languages⁵. And it was the Hixkaryána language and its OVS, considered "nonexistent", word order that made both Derbyshire and Pullum famous in the linguistic world and greatly helped advance studies on "Amazonian languages" as exemplified by the above quoted Dixon & Aikhenveld 1999, 660-page volume on Jarawara (Dixon 2004 in its 2011 paperback edition), equally bulky MGL *Aguaruna*

¹ Cf. the notice of receipt of the typescript: <Allatum die 2 mensis Januarii a. 1987>, LPos 31 (1990), 122.

² Due to a drastic social, economic and political crisis in Poland, the country found itself on the verge of collapse and the publication of *Lingua Posnaniensis* (in existence since 1949; its vol. 1 included Loukotka's paper on "some unknown languages of... South America") was under threat of liquidation of the title. LOS was conceived and created to dispose of growing piles of academically valuable and attractive materials submitted and already accepted for publication in the endangered LPos and – to save faces. The situation happy-ended for Poland with its dramatic change of political system and NATO and EU membership as well as for LPos (survival and continuation) and LOS (17 vols. in two series published between 1991-2014). Loukotka's texts appeared also in LPos 2 (1950), 3 (1951), 5 (1955), and 6 (1957). He was renowned as the author of the 1968 "catalogue-like work" which "became immensely popular" and "remained without rival for a long time" (Willem F.H. Adelaar in Campbell & Grondona 2012: 13-4; Loukotka's name is mentioned in Campbell & Grondona allegedly as many as 508 times!).

³ In 1998, somehow unexpectedly for many among the few interested in, vol. 4 (vi + 646) ("the first supplement to HAL", as Edward Vajda wrote in his review in *Language* 77/2 (2001: 360-3)) was released, with also two quite extensive grammatical outlines of Wai Wai (25-224) and Warekena (225-439).

⁴ Living in Amazonas and Pará state border area on Nhamundá~Yamundá River (population 1242 in 2012, 942 and 1012 in 2010 quoted).

⁵ Derbyshire's London University PhD dissertation *Hixkaryana Syntax*, dated 1979, rearranged and updated, was published in 1985; in its preface we read; "In the six years since the thesis was written, there have been some notable advances, both in the general research in linguistic typology and also in published (or soon to be published) studies in Amazonian languages" (vii; italics afm). Derbyshire's Hixkaryana texts, now a bibliopole and library rarity, appeared in print in 1965.

volume (Overall 2018) and the two volumes in focus of attention below, all within the range of this writer's sight, on the one hand, or Kalin 2011, 2014, on the other.

With the present review, after one-third of a century, LPos eagerly makes a comeback to the Amazonian languages (and, after two-thirds, to the beginnings of its interest in research on the indigenous South American languages) with the aim to introduce attractive recent results in the field to students and lecturers of general linguistics.

All four⁶ vols. of Derbyshire & Pullum 1986-1998 totaled 2323 pp., being thus substantially larger in volume than the two vols. of Epps & Michael, here in focus (1476 pp. altogether) but, contrary to the latter, providing grammatical descriptions ("grammatical sketches") of (only?...) ten languages/ethnolects mentioned above (and in fn. 3) – one-third of the number of sketches included in the latter. On the other hand, the former offered various other articles (introductions, in vols. 1, 3, and 4 – typological⁷ and comparative⁸ studies, indices⁹), while Epps & Michael vols. have evidently been conceived in the first place to collect and introduce possibly all known isolated languages of Greater Amazonia (after all, presenting a language isolate is itself a result of comparative and typological research¹⁰); the editors and publishers declare in the one-page "Preface" (v) that "the subsequent volumes" are to address small and larger language families".

Understandably, the grammatical sketches of so many languages in only two volumes must have resulted in their length – they are (at times much) shorter than those included in Derbyshire & Pullum ((e.g. Warekena 215 pp., Wai Wai 200 pp., Piraha 125 pp.), but still the material offered is prognosticated to prove not only sufficient but optimal for "general" linguists and even more interested non-linguists¹¹.

Following the 61-page long "front matter" is the core of the *Handbook* consisting of alphabetically arranged grammatical sketches referred to as <chapters> spreading over 1352 pages and two thick volumes in the following way:

– **Vol. I** – grammatical outlines of 13 languages: *Aikanã* (~*Mas(s)saká*~ *Kasupá*~ *Huari*~*Uari*~*Wari*~*Uapuruta*~*Waikorotá*~*Corumbiara*~*Kolumbiara*~*Tubarão*; by Hein van der Voort & Joshua Birchall; pp. 1-64; Brazil, Rodonia; approx. 250 users, 400 population), *A'ingae* (~*Cofân*; Rafael Fisher & Kees Hengeveld; 65-123; Columbia, Putumayo

⁶ Cf. footnote 3.

⁷ On certain typological features in Guajajara (Tupi-Guarani of Northeast Brazil) and on word order in Yagua (a sole Peba-Yaguan survivor of Northeast Peru) in vol. 1, and on "interclausal reference in Amahua-ca" (Panoan of Peru and Brazil) in vol. 4.

⁸ Two "Comparative Arawakan studies" in vol. 1, "A classification of Maipuran" (also Arawakan) in vol. 3, and a 130 pp. "Comparative study" of "Tupi-Guarani morphosyntax" (with five appendices) in vol. 4.

⁹ "Cumulative" to vols. 1-3 in vol 3, and 1-4 in vol. 4.

¹⁰ It is perhaps not out of place in just the present review to recall a section in LPos Loukotka 1950 (: 129-30) entitled... "Langues isolées" listing and localizing the following twelve tongues: Arikem~Uitate~Ahopovo, Gorgotoki, *Itonama*~Mačoto, *Kaničana*~Kanesi, *Kayuvava*, *Leko*~Lapalapa~Ateniano, Mašubi~Meken, Matanawi, *Mobimi*~Moyma, Parúborá, Toyeri ~Tuyoneiri~Arasairi~Huačipairi, *Yurakare*~Yuruxure~Kuči~Enete (some glottonyms *italicized* here purposefully).

¹¹ This reviewer was delighted to read (*ib.*) that "while linguists represent a primary audience for *this Handbook*, the work is also intended to be accessible and useful to scholars and other interested readers from a range of disciplines and backgrounds" (*italics* afm) – this is precisely what (and then – why he was) induced this author to produce the present text.

and Nariño, “severely endangered”; Ecuador, Sucumbíos, “definitely endangered”; respectively 379 and 600 for 2008), *Andoke* (exoethnonym; Jon Landaburu; 125-72; Colombia, along Aduche river; pop. below 500, “linguistic validity low, Spanish in everyday use, most children do not speak Andoke”), *Aʔiwa* (15 ethnonyms listed, most with numerous variants; Christine Beier & Michael; 173-221; Peru, near Ecuador border; “two known rememberers 2008-10, minimally documented, now virtually extinct”), *Betoi-Jirara* (~*Betoi*; Raoul Zamponi; 223-61; Venezuela, Apure; “a dialect cluster, today extinct”), *Cayubaba* (Mily Crevels & Pieter Muysken; 263-300; northeast Bolivia; “handful of remembering elders in 2005, on the brink of extinction”), *Chimane-Mosetén* (~*Mosetenan*; Sandy Ritchie & Jeanette Sakel; 301-70; northern Bolivia; a dialect continuum, 13,500-16,000 users), *Cholón* (Astrid Alexander-Bakkerus & Kelsey Caitlyn Neely; 371-407; northern Peru; extinct, although speakers “living in the mountains” reported in 1996 or later), *Guató* (Kristina Balykova, Gustavo Godoy & Adair Pimentel Palácio; 409-40; Brazil; “on the edge of extinction”), *Harakmbut* (~*Harakmbet*~*Hate*~mistakenly *Mashco*; An Van linden; 441-81; Peru, Cusco and Madre de Dios regions; six dialects/ethnic groups listed – one extinct, the other five “highly endangered, only a handful fluent speakers, if any, are left” in five of the six ethnolects on the list; the entire population in or around 2007 quoted – 1,967¹²), *Itonama* (~*Sihnipadara*; Mily Crevels; 483-545; Bolivia, Beni provinces of Iténez and Mamoré; extinct¹³), *Jodī* (Jorge Emilio Rosés Labrada; 547-613; Venezuela, states Amazonas and Bolívar; 2011 census data indicate 854 speakers in the population of 982)¹⁴, *Kandozi-Chapra* (Simon E. Overall; 615-57; northern Peruvian Amazon; population, according to the 2007 census, was 3,255 but “the current figure is likely to be higher”¹⁵), and “Index”;

– **Vol. II** – grammatical sketches of 17 languages: *Kanoé* (~*Kanoê* ~*Kanoee* ~*Kanoä*~*Kapishana*~*Kapišana*~*Kapixaná*~*Capixana*)¹⁶; Laércio Nora Bacelar and H. van der Voort; 659-718; Brazil, southern Rondônia, Rio Omeré Indigenous Territory (*Terra Indígena*; three speakers (two monolinguals) mentioned in 2010, total pop. ca 325), *Kwaza* (H. van der Voort; 719-66; Brazil, southeastern Rondônia; “25 speakers out of an ethnic popula-

¹² “In general, young adults and speakers up to the age of fifty are bilingual in Harakmbut and Spanish, while speakers older than fifty are mainly monolingual in Harakmbut”, revitalization efforts – didactic materials and governmental Bilingual Intercultural Education program signaled (443-4). The outline focuses on one dialect which has the highest number of speakers in the population of 1,043.

¹³ “[...] there are no Itonama speakers left today” even if “the 2012 Census registered 16,158 people auto-identifying as Itonama, of which 1,249 claimed to speak the language as well [...]” (483).

¹⁴ In his 2019 work, Rosés Labrada postulated, with “significant evidence” (549, fn. 2), Jodī to be a cognate of what he called a Jodī-Sáliban family. According to “Editor’s note” (*ib.*), the text for the *Handbook* under concern here “is included in the isolates volume [...] because this chapter was commissioned prior to the publication of” the 2019 article and because the affiliation of Jodī has continued to generate some debate” (rearrangement – afm).

¹⁵ Actually, “The Kandozi and Chapra are two indigenous groups” who “share the same culture and speak mutually intelligible varieties of the same language [...]” (615). It is by no means a unique ethnolinguistic situation or case (cf. e.g. various Mongolic groups, Karachays and Balkars, numerous peoples once united by what was known as Serbo-Croat(ian) or ... Swiss or Austrian speakers of German as their mother tongue, Russian-only-speaking Ukrainians or Byelorussians, etc.).

¹⁶ Several more ethno-/glottonyms can be found in literature.

tion of about 45”, 719, “the language survives in three separate families”, 721), *Máku* (R. Zamponi and Chris Rogers; 767-806; Brazil, northwestern Roraima; extinct – allegedly in 1925 “little more than 50 speakers [... in] three communities”, 767), *Movima* (Katharina Haude; 807-49; Bolivia, Beni; “in 2012 [...] spoken by approximately 500 adults” according to Movima’s own count, “there are no first-language learners of Movima anymore”, “severely endangered”, 807), *Muniche* (some other names quoted in the text, 854; L. Michael, Stephanie Farmer, Gregory Finley, Kasrina Sullón Acosta, C. Beier, Alexandra Chanchari Icahuate, Donalia Icahuate Baneo, and Melchor Sinti Saita; 851-91; central Peruvian Amazonia; “almost extinct [...], there are no longer any fluent speakers”¹⁷), *Mýky* (~*Irantxe*; Bernat Bardagil; 893-937; Brazil, western Mato Grosso; “today, two distinct Indigenous communities speak different varieties of the Mýky language: the Manoki and the Mýky”, 898¹⁸), *Omurano* (Zachary O’Hagan; 939-55; Peru, Loreto; “as of 2013, approximately 40 words and 15 short phrases were remembered collectively by fewer than 10 individuals [...] born between the early 1940s and 1980s [...]” their everyday language being Urarina, 939, “fluent Omurano speakers survived probably until the late 1990s or early 2000s”, 944¹⁹), *Pirahã* (~*Apáitisi*; Raiane Salles²⁰; 957-94; Brazil, Amazonas, Humaitá; “over 700” speakers “in ten villages”, 957), *Taushiro* (Z. O’Hagan; 995-1027; Peru, Loreto; the last fluent speaker is introduced by his name, 995), *Tinigua* (Katherine Bolaños; 1029-75; eastern Colombia, Caquetá; again, “Today [i. e., at least 2019], the only known speaker of the language is [...] about 90 years old”, 1029, although according to the national census results published in 2018 “a *Tinigua* group with 145 members and 28 speakers of the language is included (*Tinigua* is not mentioned). [...] the census does not specify the location of this group or how the data were collected”, 1031), *Trumai* (Raquel Guirardello-Damian; 1077-1105; Brazil, Parque Indígena do Xingu, Terra Indígena Capoto-Jarina, and dispersed in the region; out of the population of “97 [...] there are 46 individuals who can speak Trumai, with different

¹⁷ Among the very last (semi-)speakers were coauthors of the “Muniche” text (cf. p. 853). [...] the last fully-fluent speakers [...] were born between 1915 and 1925 and [...] the language was moribund by the early 1930s” (855).

¹⁸ The described linguistic situation and its ethnic and historical contexts should draw particular attention of all interested or/and involved in studies of linguistic contact, language endangerment, preservation, extinction, planning, policies, extralinguistic influence, etc., etc. Necessarily short, the description offered can be indeed inspiring, cf.: “The 2014 [...] census counted 369 Manoki and 128 Mýky. As a result of schooling, life in the Jesuit mission and extensive intermarriage with members of other Indigenous groups, language loss is severe among the Manoki. [...] in 2003 most Manoki under 50 were monolingual in Portuguese. [...] The language is much more vital among the Mýky, a majority of whom are native speakers, although proficient knowledge of Portuguese is not uncommon. Both communities maintain frequent contacts and consider each other as part of the same people” (895).

¹⁹ The Omurano speakers (but not only them) have been decimated by consecutive epidemics in the 20th century (cf. *ib.*).

²⁰ Not Daniel Everett... – the author of the almost 3.5 times more extensive “Pirahã” sketch in Derbyshire & Pullum 1986 and many other texts which made the language and its users world famous. In the 1986 (:200) sketch he classified the language as “a member of the Mura language family”. Salles (957-9) writes that “There is a general consensus that Pirahã belongs to the Mura family, but the status of its extinct members as languages or dialects is unclear. [...] The most widely accepted contemporary classification, though, is that Mura is an isolate language and Pirahã is the last surviving of its numerous dialects”

degrees of proficiency [..., f]or the younger generations, Portuguese is now the main language of daily communication [...]" (1077), **Urarina** (Knut J. Olawsky; 1107-42; Peru, Loreto, Urarinas; "spoken by fewer than 3,000 people [...], in the more remote areas, Urarina is the first language of all speakers, including children", Olawsky mentions monolingual speakers in 2000-2005, 1107)²¹, **Wánsöjöt** (~*Puinave~Camaku~*; Adam J.R. Tallman, Cynthia Hansen, and Jesús Mario Girón; 1143-89; Colombia, Guainía, and Venezuela, Orinoco suroccidental venezolano; approximately 7,270 speakers, "an effort to introduce Wánsöjöt in the schools, [...] courses [and] language revitalization programs" observed, 1145), **Wao Terero** (~*Waorani~Huaorani~Huarani~Wao~Hua~Waotededo~Wao Tirido~Auca~Auishiri~Awishiri~Sabela ~Ssabela*; Alexia Z. Fawcett; 1191-241; Ecuador, Pastaza and Napo, Waorani Ethnic Reserve; 1,766 speakers among 2,416 people who identify as Waorani, 1191), **Warao** (~*Warrau~Guarao~Guarauno* Andrés Romero-Figueroa and Konrad Rybka; 1243-82; northeastern Venezuela and adjacent parts of Guyana; pop. in Venezuela 32,000, shift to Spanish "conspicuous", "Warao monolinguals include all inhabitants of the isolated parts of the delta [Amacuro] , but only the elderly people elsewhere. In the eastern communities in Guyana [...] only a few elderly speakers remain [...], the [...] economic crisis in Venezuela drives the [...] Warao to migrate to Guyana and Brazil [...], 1245), **Yaruro** (~*Pumé*; Esteban Emilio Mosonyi and R. Zamponi; 1283-322; western Venezuela, Apume Llanos; "spoken actively and fluently by about 9,500 people"), **Yurakaré** (~*Yurújare ~Yuracare*; Rik van Gijn; 1323-52; central Bolivia, upper Mamoré River drainage area; 2-3,000 speakers, "today it is hard to find a child with active command of Yurakaré, although passive knowledge is still there", 1325), and "Index"²².

The extensiveness of the front matter results from the decision of the designers of the *Handbook* to include the 45-page-long "Introduction" by the editors Epps and Michael – and there are perhaps reasons for doing so as it appears to concern the planned edition in its entirety, not only the two vols. under concern here, cf.: "The Handbook seeks to address these issues [signaled in two preceding paragraphs] by systematically compiling comprehensive, accessible grammatical overviews for every (*italics* afm) Amazonian language family and isolate for which adequate documentation exists" (xviii). "The burgeoning number of high-quality descriptive studies of Amazonian languages that have emerged over the past few decades" is mentioned (*ib.*) in this context, hence expect the appearance of (a rather large number of) consecutive volumes of the cover <HSK 44> in some near future.

The "Introduction" defines the term *Amazonian* used as an ethnonym and a glottonym to define what is and what will be included in or excluded from the entire Amazonian Handbook (xvii, xixf.), outlines (overwhelmingly tragic) histories of indigenous peoples

²¹ Urarina "exhibits a range of unusual grammatical characteristics that are rare or absent in other languages" (1107); actually, from the point of view of "Western" linguists this can be said about perhaps all Amazonian languages.

²² With few minor additions, the data provided in this longish paragraph have been intentionally restricted to what appeared in respective sketches-chapters and fastidiously selected with the focus on what the reviewer supposes to be most intriguing, fascinating for/to the possibly widest audience of potential users of such a *Handbook*.

and languages covered the term prior to (“a long view”, xxif.) and following the “European invasion and beyond” (xxii-ix), and provides passages and sections of general linguistic and linguists’ current interests, like language classification and diversity²³ (xxxif.), endangerment, shifts, revitalization efforts (xixf.), language contact (xxxivff.), unique typological features and phenomena (“Linguistic insights from Amazonia” section (xxxixff.) deserves special recommendation), outline of research (xxxviff.) from first documentations in the past, to present-day academic research, and “the view ahead” (xlif.)²⁴.

Since the two volumes described here concentrate on isolate languages, one more sentence from the “Introduction” deserves quotation: Some thirty of these genealogical units²⁵ are isolates” (xvii) – it allows the conclusion that the two *Handbook* volumes provide descriptions of *all of them* (see footnote 26, however).

The “Introduction” necessarily provides some space to language isolates as “the term “isolate” can be understood in a number of ways” (like no living relatives, no known relatives, poorly~unsatisfactorily attested sister languages with no remaining speakers; xviii) and a number of languages treated as isolated and therefore included in the *Language isolates* volumes were not treated as such in the past.

A map of a major (northern) part of Southern America with the localization (with points) of all the thirty described isolates is printed on p. xvi opposite the first page of the “Introduction” and systematically reprinted on the verso of the first page of each grammatical sketch but with toponyms of major geographical objects (cities, rivers), instead of glottonyms, marked, and with a smaller accompanying map of the area and/or region where the respective language is or was spoken or is or was associated with it and its speakers, placed beneath as projection from the point of the language localization on the larger map. Generally, the idea to organize the cartographical material in such a system, wisely conceived and consistently applied throughout the two volumes, could be only praised were it not the challenge the maps (or rather the size of characters printed on them) pose to this reviewer’s elderly eyes (technically, the maps could easily be much more transparent with no or little cost to avoid this discriminatory treatment of potential users of the *Handbook*).

The two “Indexes”, separate for each volume, seem open to doubt and vigilance: by far too short lists of entries being in turn too few and too general²⁶.

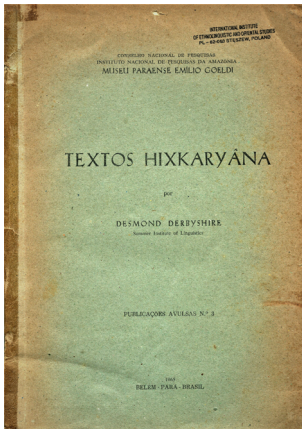
²³ Amazonia, comprehended territorially, ethno- and demographically, and linguistically (as far as ethnic and linguistic diversity is concerned) as defined in the “Introduction” is indeed comparable only to New Guinea and its neighborhood (cf. xxxif.).

²⁴ “In sum, the study of Amazonian languages is of urgent priority and enormous intellectual and humanistic value” (xlii).

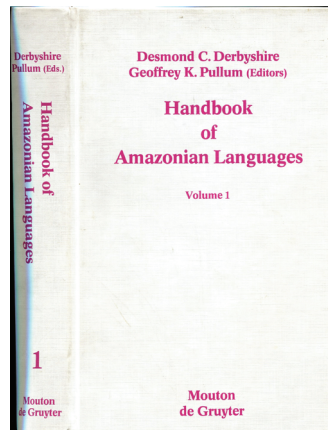
²⁵ i.e., “hundreds of Indigenous languages corresponding to some 100 distinct lineages” (*ib.*).

²⁶ e.g. browsing through the volumes, this writer spotted somewhere in the text mentioning the glottonym *Leko*; since it had been placed on Loukotka’s 1950: 129 list of *langues isolées* but did not appear among the 30 sketches in the *Handbook*, this writer intended to revisit the spot using the indexes – in vain. Rationally – skimming through the almost 1,400 pages to look for one short word would be a nonsense. An experienced guessing game helped to find the suspicious fragment (“... a region of high linguistic diversity [...], with approximately 50 different languages pertaining to at least 18 different genealogical units [...] Seven language families... Besides these, 11 isolate languages are also spoken in that region [among them]: [...], Canichana, [...], Leko [...]”, both on Loukotka list, cf. fn. 10, but untouched~neglected (?) in the *Handbook*...) in less

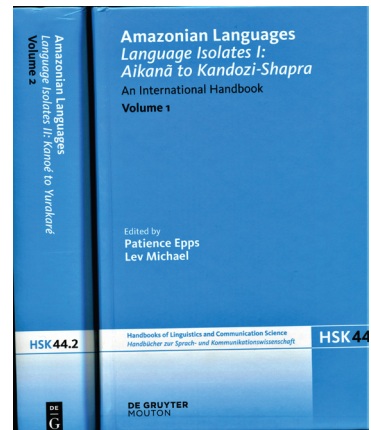
Data concerning demography (the entire population versus the population of speakers), linguistic situation (language attitudes, status, policies, etc.) of the communities and tongues involved, research (state of the art, current activity and prospects), etc., provided in the *Hand-book* clearly show that most of the languages described in the work are either seriously endangered or actually dead²⁷ and that rather few of them have been “adequately”²⁸ documented. Therefore, what this writer would like to point to as the first and foremost of what the De Gruyter Mouton HSK 44.1-2 publication offers and promises to offer is an extremely valuable documentation of both the linguistic situation of Amazonia as defined by the authors, editors, and publishers as well as the thirty individual languages of the region described – and providing such documentation in view of the facts that up to 50% of the world’s languages are endangered (or recently dead) and about 80% of them still remain “underdocumented” or completely undocumented doubtlessly is the most urgent task of linguistics and linguists. Virtually, a race against time which will be the factor determining the actual value, utility and presumed high rating of this new “handbook of Amazonian languages”.



Derbyshire 1965



Derbyshire & Pullum 1986



Epp & Michael 2023

than ten minutes on page 897 (!) – this writer’s modest and tiny success and satisfaction and an enormous failure of the *Handbook*! Without at least personal names, toponyms, ethnonyms, and glottonyms (there are plenty of each of them in the books) indexed, the edition can hardly serve as a reliable and handy reference work, unfortunately.

²⁷ Population smallness of a speech community is not necessarily a decisive factor in the processes of endangering or annihilating the community’s tongue; the merciless killer is the abandonment of its intergenerational transmission (as social organisms all languages are doomed to change and finally die or undergo rebirth as new tongues with speakers finding the languages of their distant forefathers simply unintelligible).

²⁸ *i.e.* at least with existing comprehensive (practically it is “thick”) two-way dictionaries, reference grammars, and representative text collections. Works – not incidentally, on Amazonian isolates described in the *Handbook* – like Olawsky 2006 (over 960 pp.), van Gijn 2006 (370 pp.), Giron 2008 (496 pp.), but also less bulky ones like Pike & Saint 1988 (188 pp., “The texts” on pp. 105-68), could serve as examples here of what is needed.

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²⁹ Rio Madeira, the largest tributary of the Amazon.

³⁰ The volume includes also Loukotka's “Supplementary Notes to the Classification of Australian Aboriginal Languages”, pp. 135-57 + a large size map.

³¹ LPos vol. 6 (1957) includes Loukotka's extensive “Classification des langues papoues”, pp. 19-83 + a large size map; the volume publishes also “Notes on Huambisa Phonemics” by David Beasley and Kenneth L. Pike on pp. 1-8.