The linguistic encoding of landscape in Lokono
Rybka, K.A.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
2. Sociolinguistic background

In 2009, while conducting my first field research among the Lokono, I visited an ethnically mixed settlement called Orealla on the Guyanese side of the Corentyne River. During the ten days that I spent in this otherwise exciting and thriving locality, I found only five fluent speakers of Lokono, a mere trifle among the 1500 inhabitants of the village. Unfortunately, the ratio later turned out to be representative of Lokono settlements today.

In Orealla, I worked with an elderly Lokono consultant named Eddy who had moved there from another Guyanese village. He was talkative, knowledgeable, and above all excited at the possibility of talking to someone in his mother language. To Eddy’s regret, he had to use the Guyanese Creole English, the local *lingua franca*, also known as *Creolese*, to talk to younger people in his new village. When discussing language shift in Orealla, Eddy made the following memorable comment:

\[
\text{Nadukharukha damun, dadukha nashibonro, fonashiatidiathi tha nashibo. (1)}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{na– dik}^h_a– \text{rik}^h_a & \quad \text{da– min} & \quad \text{da– dik}^h_a & \quad \text{na– fibo– n– ro} \\
3\text{PLA– see– COND} & \quad 1\text{SGA– DAT} & \quad 1\text{SGA– see} & \quad 3\text{PLA– face– LOC.WHR– ATL} \\
\text{fonâ– tfi} & \quad \text{d}^h_a– \text{tfi} & \quad t^h– a & \quad \text{na– fibo} \\
\text{hungry– SBJ.REL– M} & \quad \text{SMLR– APRX}3\text{FA– E.V} & \quad 3\text{PLA– face} \\
\end{align*}
\]

‘When (the children) look at me, I see their faces; they look as if they were hungry.’

Today, this metaphorical hunger for the Lokono linguistic and cultural heritage is growing. Members of both the Lokono and the academic community are trying to document the Lokono linguistic and cultural heritage, and contribute to its preservation. This chapter re-assesses the vitality of the Lokono language, and gives a detailed overview of these activities, past and present, with particular focus on the Surinamese dialect. The aim of the chapter is to provide scholars with an updated picture of the Lokono context in order to facilitate future work between the Lokono and the academic community. As part of the assessment, I discuss the state-of-the-art in language documentation, a term that requires a word of definition (see also recent volumes by Chelliah and Reuse 2011; Thieberger 2011b; Gippert, Himmelmann, and Mosel 2006; Grenoble and Furbee 2010). Thieberger (2011a) aptly summarizes what language documentation means today and what practices this ‘new paradigm of research’ represents:

---

5 I would like to thank the Lokono people who are engaged in language development activities, and everyone else who contributed information to this chapter. In particular I want to thank Mr. Martin Purci, Mr. Willem Visser, Mrs. Ursula Visser-Biswane, Mrs. Sonia Orassie, Mrs. Carla Madisian, and Dr. Laura van Broekhoven. I also want to thank Prof. Kees Hengeveld and Dr. Eithne Carlin for their comments on the first draft of the chapter, and the two anonymous reviewers of *Language Documentation and Conservation* for their feedback.
This paradigm focuses on collaboration with the speakers and on the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge systems, of which language is one part. A further focus is on primary data as the warrant for analytical claims, and emphasizes replicability of the analysis resulting in such claims. From this new paradigm flows the need to create reusable primary data, and to provide for its accessibility and long-term curation.

Thieberger (2011a:1)

Language documentation defined in this way contrasts with, but does not oppose, the older ‘grammar and dictionary’ paradigm. It emphasizes accessibility of primary data (audio and video recordings), which can be reused for the same or for other purposes (replicable, reusable), and the focus on language as a part of a larger knowledge system. This chapter gives an overview of the language documentation outcomes in the Lokono case in order to facilitate the use of the collected primary data for new purposes.

The chapter is structured in the following way. After providing background information on the Lokono language (§ 2.1), I re-assess its vitality following UNESCO’s language endangerment guidelines (§ 2.2). I then discuss language development activities, including language documentation (§ 2.3). As a way of summing up, I bring the insights from previous sections together, re-evaluate the vitality of the language, and consider the prospects for future language- and culture-related activities (§ 2.4). In the online Appendix I, I provide a catalogue of scholarly work on the Lokono language and culture. The online Appendix II contains an overview of the heritage organizations operating within the Lokono communities.

2.1 Linguistic and geographic setting

Lokono is spoken in the Guianas—a complex linguistic environment (Carlin and Arends 2002; Cerquiglini, Alessio, and Sibille 2003; Forte 1987; Renault-Lescure and Goury 2009). In the three Guianas (Republic of Suriname, Republic of Guyana, and French Guiana), there are three official languages (French, Dutch, and English, respectively), three creole lingua francas with their dialectal continua (Guianese Creole French, Sranantongo, and Guyanese Creole English, respectively) and a number of other languages of Eurasian origin (e.g., Javanese, Hakka Chinese, Hindustani (Sarman), Brazilian Portuguese). On top of that, there are Amerindian languages. These include Lokono, Wapishana, Mawayana, and Palikur from the Arawakan stock; Kari'na, Trio, Wayana, Waiwai, Akawaio, Patamona, Makushi,

6 Among the Lokono speakers the language is known as Lokono Dian or Lokono for short. Next to this endonym, the language is also known, both within and outside of the community, under the exonym Arawak (Arowak in Dutch, Aravak in French), a term probably first written down by Captain Wyatt during his voyage between 1594–1595 (Patte 2010).

7 I use the term Amerindian, rather than indigenous, since the latter term is heavily politicized and can be misleading. Maroon groups in Suriname, for instance, also have the status of indigenous people (Kambel and Mackay 1999).
Pemon, Katuena, and Sikïïyana from the Cariban stock; Emerillon (Teko) and Wayâpi from the Tupian stock; as well as Warao and Taruma (both unclassified).\textsuperscript{8}

Lokono represents the Northern Arawakan language family, and is closely related to the Wayuu language, and the nearly extinct Parajuano language, both spoken in the La Guajira peninsula (Colombia, Venezuela). Its other relatives are the now extinct Taino and Island Carib, the descendant of which is called Garifuna. Garifuna is a vital language of Honduras, Belize, Nicaragua, and Guatemala (Captain 2005; Hickerson 1992; Taylor 1962). Lokono is, however, only remotely related to the other Arawakan languages of the Guianas (Aikhenvald 2012; Dixon and Aikhenvald 2006).

Lokono has two mutually intelligible dialects. Western Lokono (or Guyanese Lokono) is spoken in Guyana, and Eastern Lokono (or Surinamese Lokono) in Suriname and French Guiana. The Western dialect is more conservative in terms of phonological processes such as palatalization across morpheme boundaries, and syllable reduction processes (e.g., Baarle 1996). The two dialects also differ lexically and syntactically due to prolonged language contact with different languages (Warao, Akawaio, Kari’na, English, and Guyanese Creole English in the case of the Western dialect, and Dutch, Sranantongo, and Kari’na in the case of the Eastern dialect).\textsuperscript{9} There are few modern linguistic materials on the Western dialect, which makes a detailed comparison impossible at the moment. However, at the University of West Indies at Mona, Jamaica, Daidrah Smith is currently completing her Ph.D. dissertation on the Guyanese dialect.

Geographically, the Lokono people live in peri-coastal villages in the three Guianas, as well as in the three capital cities: Georgetown, Paramaribo, and Cayenne. The rural peri-coastal settlements are scattered throughout the Guianas, intermixed mostly with those of the Kari’na people, speaking a Cariban language, and in Guyana with those of the Warao people, speaking a language isolate. The villages form a belt stretching from east to west across the Guianas. North of this belt, there is only the actual coast of the Guianas where the majority of the countries’ populations reside, and where most of the economy is concentrated. The coast is the realm of the official languages, the lingua francas, and the languages of Eurasian origin. South of the peri-coastal belt, on the other hand, one finds the interior, inhabited by the Maroon people, and other Amerindian groups. According to an unpublished report by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, there is also a small Lokono community in Venezuela, not far from the Guyanese border (Summer

\textsuperscript{8} The reader should be aware that the autodeesignations used by the Amerindian peoples show some variation, and may not coincide in some cases with those used here. For example, Kali’na /kali?na/ is the term used by the Tyrewu dialect speakers, while the Aretyry dialect speakers prefer Kari’na /kari?na/, a spelling that reflects their pronunciation (with an /r/ in place of the /l/). In the new orthography developed by Yamada, more phonetic detail is represented, therefore the names would be written as Kali’nia and Kari’nia, respectively.

\textsuperscript{9} Within the Eastern dialect (at least), there is also some linguistic variation between the villages, although the recent increase in mobility makes it difficult to judge which features belonged to which variant. These are minor differences such as the presence or the absence of an initial /h/. According to the speakers, the differences were more pronounced in the past allowing speakers to deduce from the way one speaks the village from which one comes.
Institute of Linguistics 2002). Finally, there is also a sizeable community of Lokono people living in the Netherlands who emigrated from Suriname in the last few decades for economic, educational, and political reasons. Patte (2014) also mentions an expatriate Lokono community in Great Britain, but provides little detail about its origin and sociolinguistic profile.

While the number of Lokono villages in French Guiana appears to be growing, the Surinamese settlements have since long been suffering from depopulation. Many Lokono people move to the urban or industrialized complexes in pursuit of employment and educational opportunities (e.g., Wekker, Molendijk, and Vernooij 1992). The present Lokono communities around Cayenne in French Guiana were established only in the second half of the 20th century, mostly as a result of such migrations out of Suriname (e.g., Grenand 1981). These movements escalated during the War of the Interior (1986–1992) in Suriname, when many villages had to be abandoned for safety reasons. Many of the resultant urban refugees never returned to their home villages. This sudden dislocation to the city for many meant separation from the Lokono language and culture. As a consequence, some villages disappeared completely (e.g., Kopi in Suriname) and intergenerational language transmission was disrupted (see § 2.2.2).

However, as asphalt roads and electricity are reaching the Lokono villages located closer to the urbanized and industrialized areas, a trend to move back to such settlements is increasing. The trend, supported by the Surinamese government, which funds new housing projects outside the capital, attracts not only the Lokono but also other ethnic groups. As a result, Surinamese villages such as Powakka in the vicinity of the SURALCO bauxite plant, or Matta in the vicinity of Paramaribo and the International Airport at Zanderij, continue to grow, though their ethnic profile is slowly changing toward a mixed Lokono–Creole composition. Similarly in Guyana and French Guiana other ethnic groups are continuously absorbed into the Lokono villages.

2.2 Language vitality

The assessment of the vitality of a language is a complex matter. In order to make it more comparable in the analysis presented below I follow the UNESCO guidelines for assessing language endangerment listed in (2) below (UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages 2003, henceforth UNESCO). In the list I also include language contact, which is not part of UNESCO’s framework, but was added here in order to give a more comprehensive picture of the Lokono sociolinguistic situation.

---

10 I use the UNESCO guidelines, as opposed to, for example, Fishman’s (1991) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), or the framework used by Ethnologue (Gordon 2005; Grimes 2000; Lewis 2009), since Lokono has previously been graded with respect to the UNESCO criteria (Moseley 2010). This adds a comparative diachronic dimension.
(2) (a) Number of speakers (§ 2.2.1)
(b) Intergenerational language transmission (§ 2.2.2)
(c) Domains of language use (§ 2.2.3)
(d) Language attitudes and policies (§ 2.2.4)
(e) Language contact (§ 2.2.5)
(f) Availability of materials for language education and literacy (§ 2.3)
(g) Type and quality of documentation (§ 2.3)

In this section, I look at factors (a) to (e). Factors (f) and (g) are discussed in detail in section 2.3 as part of the description of language development activities. In the UNESCO framework, a language can score from 0 to 5 on each factor. The grading system is given in (3).

(3) 0 = extinct.
1 = critically endangered.
2 = severely endangered.
3 = definitely endangered.
4 = unsafe.
5 = safe.

Based on data from Carlin and Arends (2002) and Queixalós and Renault-Lescure (2000), Lokono has previously been classified as severely endangered, but no detailed discussion of its situation has been provided (Moseley 2010). In the following sections, I re-evaluate its status by discussing each factor in detail.

2.2.1 Number of speakers

Both the number of ethnic Lokono (i.e. the total ethnic population) and the percentage of Lokono speakers in the three Guianas are hard to estimate. In Table 3, I give the previously published estimates. It should be stressed, however, that there has been no proper sociolinguistic survey of the Lokono language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Number of Speakers</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French Guiana</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>A few hundred speakers</td>
<td>Patte (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>Forte (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>SIL (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>Mink (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>Patte (2014)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on long-term fieldwork and the collaboration with Lokono organizations from the three Guianas since 2009, I conclude that the figures today are lower. The percentage of fluent speakers—that is, speakers who have an active knowledge of many linguistic domains—is around 5% of the ethnic population. There is also a
sizeable community of semi-speakers possessing different degrees of passive knowledge.

Although the precise data are missing, a similar picture emerges from the last population census in Suriname. The census conducted in 2012 lumps all Amerindian groups of the country into one category: *Inheems* (Dutch for ‘indigenous’). According to the source, 20344 people declared themselves *Inheems* (Algemeen Bureau voor de Statistiek 2013, I:46). Additionally, the census reports that in 368 households, inhabited cumulatively by 1340 people, an Amerindian language is the main means of communication. Moreover, in 329 households, an Amerindian language is a second language (Algemeen Bureau voor de Statistiek 2014, III:53). In this latter case, the number of inhabitants is not given, but assuming the same ratio of cohabitation, we can expect around 1198 inhabitants. Amerindian languages, on the whole, are therefore used at home by around 12.5% of the ethnic Amerindian population. However, only for 6.5% of the total Amerindian population is an indigenous language the first language. Knowing that Cariban languages are on the whole more vital than Lokono, it seems reasonable to expect that Lokono is spoken at home by around 5% of the ethnic Lokono population. In UNESCO’s terms, Lokono would score therefore as “critically endangered” (grade 1), since “very few speak the language” (UNESCO 2003:9).

2.2.2 Intergenerational language transmission

The Lokono language is not being transmitted to children anymore. Lokono children are raised speaking the official languages and the *lingua francas*. The break in transmission took place more or less two generations ago, and is attributed by many speakers to social stigma and institutional oppression. In Suriname, for instance, the older generations report that it was forbidden to speak Lokono at school, even between students. In all three Guianas, Amerindians were considered to be the lowest cohort of society by other, more numerous ethnic groups. It should be mentioned, however, that the Lokono have used creole languages at least since the 19th century to communicate with the colonizers, though it is quite likely that this phenomenon has an even longer history. It has also been claimed that in the 19th century there were already Lokono communities that spoke Berbice Creole Dutch as their mother tongue (Robertson 1987:24). It is also a fact that Berbice Creole Dutch is heavily influenced by Lokono vocabulary (see Kouwenberg 1994).

In the case of the Lokono, who live close to the urbanized centers, this meant that the parents often preferred to teach their children the *lingua franca* and the official language, so that their children could fit in better within society in the future, and, for instance, find a better job. Economic considerations have played therefore an important role in language shift as well. Moreover, many Lokono report also that they spent part of their childhood in the city due to the War of the Interior (1986-1992), which further contributed to disrupting intergenerational transmission. As a result, the Lokono linguistic community today is best described as a continuum of language proficiency. Since again quantitative data are missing, in Figure 1, I schematically represent the language skills of different Lokono age groups based on my fieldwork in the three Guianas. Gender plays a secondary role in the distribution
of Lokono language skills, with women, who are typically less mobile, tending to be more fluent in Lokono.

**Figure 1.**—Language skills among different age groups of Lokono people.

Based on extensive fieldwork in virtually all Lokono villages, the collaboration with numerous Lokono organizations throughout the last six years, and a survey of language skills in one village (Cassipora), the following picture of Lokono language skills emerges. For comparative purposes we can describe the speaking skills of the Lokono represented schematically in Figure 1 in terms of the proficiency guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). ACTFL uses the following five major categories: superior, distinguished, advanced, intermediate, and novice (for details see ACTFL 2012).

The members of the oldest generations of Lokono (70+) are fluent Lokono speakers—that is, they have active and passive knowledge of many domains, corresponding to the categories ‘superior’ and ‘distinguished’ in ACTFL terms. Members of this group also often have ‘advanced’ to ‘intermediate’ speaking skills of the lingua franca, and usually ‘novice’ knowledge of the official language. However, the knowledge of the lingua franca varies a lot in this group on an individual basis.

Lokono language skills are decreasing with age. People between 50 and 70 are usually ‘advanced’ speakers of all three languages, but use Lokono sporadically, due to the fact that the use of official languages, lingua francas, and Lokono is dictated by different sociolinguistic factors (see § 2.2.3). Sranantongo is nevertheless the dominant language in this group as a whole. The generation of 30- to 50-year-olds has, at best, ‘intermediate’, and usually only passive knowledge of Lokono, but ‘advanced’ to ‘distinguished’ knowledge of the official language and the lingua franca. The youngest generation has neither active nor passive knowledge of the Lokono language, but ‘advanced’ to ‘distinguished’ knowledge of the other languages, with clearly more proficiency in Sranantongo. Worth noticing is the fact that it is the lingua francas that are today the means of daily communication bridging the generational gap. In UNESCO’s terms, Lokono is again rated,
therefore, as “critically endangered” (grade 1), since “the language is used by very few speakers, mostly of great-grandparental generation” (UNESCO 2003:8).

2.2.3 Domains of language use

The domains, in which Lokono is used today, are limited, while the official languages dominate most of the formal, and the *lingua francas* most of the informal, contexts. Official languages are used exclusively in the educational systems of the three nation-states. They also dominate the mass media and the politics. The creole *lingua francas* are today also present in the media, and this trend is clearly increasing when compared with the situation from a few years ago. Noteworthy is the fact that since the 1980s, Desi Bouterse, the present president of Suriname, often addresses the masses both within and outside the country in Sranantongo instead of Dutch. In any case, *lingua francas* are the *de facto* languages of daily interaction for many, though certainly not all, inhabitants of the Guianas, leaving very little room outside the home to use Lokono.

In Suriname, there used to be a Lokono radio broadcast every week that continued for decades up to the middle of the 1990s. However, after Just Orassie—the Lokono radio voice of Suriname—retired, there was no one to take over his position. Since 2010, an Amerindian quarterly has been published in Suriname by the *Vereniging van Inheemse Dorpshoofden in Suriname* ‘Association of Amerindian Chiefs in Suriname’. The title of the publication is *Maraka*, which means ‘medicine-man’s rattle’ in Lokono and the Cariban languages of the area, but except for occasional Lokono titles of columns such as *Hiyaro Diadiadwan* ‘women’s conversations’ its content is exclusively in Dutch.

The Lokono language is, on the whole, closed to new domains. Coinage of terms for novel items is rare, especially when compared with the intensity of coinage in the past (see Penard and Penard 1926; Rybka n.d.). The Lokono used to coin new terms for concepts and tools borrowed from other cultures, often by means of complex descriptive nominalizations as in (4).

(4)  *faretʰo bian koti darhidikwana*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>fare</th>
<th>şi</th>
<th>biyi</th>
<th>ku</th>
<th>dărj</th>
<th>kwana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>white.man</td>
<td>two</td>
<td>foot</td>
<td>run–NMLZ.INSTR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘bicycle (lit. ‘white man’s two feet running implement’)’

The shifts in domains are also visible in the naming pattern of new settlements. These do not receive Lokono names anymore, but are named in the official language

---

11 The domains of use of the official languages and the *lingua francas* have been greatly simplified in this chapter. For more detail see also the forthcoming volume by Yakpo and Muysekh (n.d.).

12 The creole *lingua francas* are not used as first languages by the communities of recent immigrants (e.g., Chinese, Brazilians), who nevertheless use Sranantongo to talk to Surinamese, but rarely learn Dutch. The Amerindian communities in the south (e.g., Trio, Wayana) often use Dutch to communicate with the outsiders.
(e.g., *Klein Powakka, Hollandse Kamp*, both villages in Suriname, and *Cécilia* a village in French Guiana). In UNESCO’s terms, Lokono is therefore rated again as “severely endangered” (grade 2) for shifts in the domains of use. In the UNESCO’s report this category is characterized in following way:

*The non-dominant language is used only in highly formal domains, especially in ritual and administration. The language may also still be used at the community center, at festivals and at ceremonial occasions where older members of the community have a chance to meet. The limited domain may also include homes where grandparents and other older extended family members reside and other traditional gathering places of the elderly. Many people can understand the language but cannot speak it.*

UNESCO (2003:10)

For response to new domains, however, Lokono scores zero, falling into the category of languages that are “not used in any new domains” (UNESCO 2003:11).

### 2.2.4 Language attitudes and policies

It is noteworthy that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was translated into Lokono. However, very few Lokono people are actually familiar with the document—a problem of distribution that applies to all materials in the Lokono language. The utility of the document is also limited due to the fact that it is written in an idiosyncratic spelling used by the translator. Also notable is the fact that in all three countries there is a national Amerindian day, during which the Amerindian peoples of the Guianas celebrate their cultural heritage with the rest of the society. However, the governmental policies and practices regarding the Amerindian languages are less encouraging. In general terms, even though the situation differs per country, in all three Guianas there is a discrepancy between theory and practice when it comes to language attitudes and policies.

In Suriname, the exoglossic language policy, or in fact lack of any official language policy, has since the colonial times endorsed Dutch as the sole official language, and the government will most likely continue upholding this stance for the decades to come. Amerindian languages in Suriname therefore do not have an official status. On the other hand, in Guyana, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs tries to implement policies that facilitate cultural, social, and economic development of the Amerindians (see the Lokono language course described in § 2.3.4). However, the efforts are still far from constituting a well-planned, sustainable, and consequent policy, and are limited to smaller projects. Lokono, together with other Amerindian languages, is however recognized as a regional language in Guyana. Finally in French Guiana, Lokono together with other Amerindian and Maroon languages has the status of a regional language of France. The local government has on more than

---

one occasion supported the activities of the Lokono organizations in French Guiana. This, however, happens on a project-by-project basis, and it is unlikely that Lokono will be endorsed on any long-term basis in the French department. Despite clear differences between the three countries, there is no actual implemented language policy aimed at sustaining and developing the Lokono language. The governments’ actions have until now been limited to small, short-term projects. In UNESCO’s terms, when we look at the practical side of language policy, Lokono scores therefore again as “critically endangered” (grade 1).

In the settlements themselves in all three countries, there is support for language revitalization, especially among the adult ethnic Lokono who do not speak the language anymore. This applies also to the expatriates living in the Netherlands. However, not many Lokono participate actively in the attempts at revitalizing the language. The language, due to the already ethnically mixed profile of the group, is not a strong component of the Lokono identity. Hardly any Lokono today sees it as a prerequisite to claims of Lokono ethnicity. Although the social stigma of being Amerindian is still present in some form, the Lokono are part of the fabric of society. They are not ashamed anymore of speaking their language publicly, although this hardly ever happens due to the limited number of fluent speakers. They eagerly participate in the celebrations of the Amerindian day, manufacture handicrafts for sale, while some engage even in international collaborations with the Lokono from the other countries. In UNESCO’s terms, Lokono scores therefore as “severely endangered” (grade 2) with regard to community’s attitudes and policies: “some members support language maintenance; others are indifferent, or may even support language loss” (UNESCO 2003:14).

2.2.5 Language contact

Contact-induced phenomena in Lokono, especially lexical borrowing, are described in a number of publications (Baarle 1995; Jubitana 1998; Patte 2005; Rybka n.d.). Suffice it to say that Lokono shows both lexical and structural borrowing from the languages it is in contact with. I want to mention here, however, a metalinguistic category that the speakers use— namely, *diep Lokono*, Dutch for ‘deep Lokono’— which is a reflection of the contact situation. Ethne Carlin (p.c.) suggests that the distinction is parallel to the distinction made for Sranantongo, in which *dipi dipi* ‘deep deep’ stands for archaic forms and more elaborate style, “not riddled with Dutch, and which is difficult for most urban Creoles” (Carlin 2004:201). Similarly for Lokono, the term *diep* is used to describe words or structures that are not part of the active knowledge of particular speakers. As such the *diep*-category serves as a mechanism allowing speakers to talk about their own depletion of Lokono vocabulary and grammar in a face-saving manner. In other words, instead of saying

---

14 A similar distinction is also found in the Trio language (Cariban), where the locative *antînâo* ‘deep (in water or ground)’ in its extended use means ‘difficult to understand’. As such it refers, for instance, to the ceremonial dialogue used by the Trio until about the 1960s (Carlin 2004: 201).
I do not know that word or structure, one can say: This is deep Lokono. I have not attested any equivalent term for the distinction in the Lokono language itself, which further shows that it is a phenomenon limited to the speakers who already shifted to other languages, and are therefore in need of verbalizing the changes in their linguistic repertoire. Interestingly too, there is no lexicalized term for the opposite of diep. The language-contact criterion is not part of the UNESCO’s framework, and is therefore omitted in the final assessment.

Since the rest of the thesis zooms in on the encoding of landscape, it is worth noting that this domain is also affected by language contact. The attested borrowed landscape terms are listed in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borrowing</th>
<th>Lokono</th>
<th>Meaning of the Lokono term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bergi ‘hill’</td>
<td>horhorho</td>
<td>any landform, a general term unspecified with respect to size and shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forto ‘city/Paramaribo’</td>
<td>thoyoshikwa</td>
<td>typically the capital city Paramaribo, but also other big cities, literally ‘old house’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liba ‘river’</td>
<td>oni</td>
<td>a river (lit. ‘rain’) refers to the largest rivers that end in the sea; a term often replaced by proper names of rivers in today’s speech or barhâ dako ‘tributary of the sea’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kriki ‘creek’</td>
<td>onikhan</td>
<td>a creek (lit. ‘little rain’), refers to all other watercourses (and their tributaries) that and in the major rivers, irrespective of their size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zwampu ‘swamp’</td>
<td>onêbera</td>
<td>a swamp or a waterlogged area, typically not permanent (literally ‘big rain’, in contrast to onikhan ‘creek’ and oni ‘river’)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All borrowings are from Sranantongo, the language of informal contexts. The referents of the borrowings and the Lokono equivalents are, however, not exactly the same. The term liba ‘river’ was attested in the speech of a number of speakers. The Lokono equivalent oni ‘river’ is used primarily in its original sense ‘rain’, which must have stimulated the borrowing. On the whole, instead of using a generic term when talking about rivers in Suriname, the speakers use their proper names or the descriptive term barhâ dako ‘tributary of the sea’. Only the biggest watercourses in Suriname—those that end in the sea—fall into the category of the referents of oni, which makes the use of proper names feasible as a strategy for referring to them. The meaning of the noun liba in Sranantongo does not necessarily entail that the watercourse ends in the sea. The term oni is also used productively in Guyanese Lokono. The Lokono term onikhan refers in turn to all other watercourses—those that flow into larger creeks and finally into rivers. The Sranantongo term kriki is, on the other hand, restricted to small watercourses only. The term onêbera and zwampu are probably the closest equivalents; the referents of the Lokono onêbera are, however, usually seasonal. Similarly, there appears to be little difference between forto (from English fort) and thoyoshikwa (lit. ‘old house’) apart from the underlying semantic structure, encoding the different historical perspective on the
capital city Paramaribo. The term horhorho ‘landform’ is only an approximation of the meaning of the term bergi—a borrowing that ultimately comes from Dutch berg ‘mountain’. The Lokono term is unspecified for size and shape and it is entangled in a whole system of complex expressions, with relational and configurational nouns that specify its spatial properties. This system is discussed at length in chapter on landform expressions (chapter 4).

2.3 State-of-the-art in language development

With regard to the UNESCO’s vitality factors, in spite of the long historical record of materials on Lokono, the language scores merely 2 on the availability of materials for language education and literacy. The existing grammatical descriptions leave much to be desired (§ 2.3.1), and the existing literacy materials in Lokono have reached few speakers (§ 2.3.2). This is clearly attributable to the fact that until recently writing and reading in Lokono has been a matter exclusive to missionaries, researchers, and a few interested Lokono. It also shows that little effort has been done on the part of the researchers to produce materials for the community. Only in 2010 have steps been taken by the community to standardize and popularize the Lokono writing system in the three Guianas (§ 2.3.3). With respect to UNESCO’s criteria, Lokono falls into the category described in the following way: “written materials exist, but they may only be useful for some members of the community; for others, they may have a symbolic significance. Literacy education in the language is not a part of the school curriculum” (UNESCO 2013:12).

Particular attention is paid below also to language documentation, for which Lokono scores relatively high. There are a few grammatical sketches, scientific articles, dictionaries, and even glossaries of specialized vocabularies such as plant names (§ 2.3.1). More importantly, a repository of reusable primary Lokono language data has been created (§ 2.3.5). However, most of these materials focus on the Surinamese dialect, while the Guyanese dialect remains understudied. In terms of UNESCO’s criteria, Lokono scores therefore 3 for the Surinamese dialect, representing languages that may have “an adequate grammar or sufficient numbers of grammars, dictionaries and texts but no everyday media; audio and video recordings of varying quality or degree of annotation may exist” (UNESCO 2003:16). The Guyanese dialect scores, however, only 1, since “there are only a few grammatical sketches, short word-lists, and fragmentary texts; audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality, or are completely unannotated” (UNESCO 2003:16). Most recently, in the fall of 2015, the linguist Keisha Josephs together with Sheldon Noel, a member of the Dakota Nation and in cooperation with Ivan Cornelius, a Lokono teacher from the village Wakapoa, will begin the documentation of the Guyanese dialect. This project will improve the state of documentation of the lesser studied Guyanese dialect.
2.3.1 Language descriptions

In spite of the fact that Lokono boasts a long history of research, there is still no modern comprehensive grammar of the language. Important historical references include the works of Claudius Henricus de Goeje (Goeje 1928; 1929; 1942) as well as a Lokono-German dictionary (Schumann and Schumann 1882a) and a grammar (Schumann and Schumann 1882b). The first modern grammatical sketch was a dissertation by Pet (1987). It was, however, theory-driven as his main purpose in describing Lokono nominal phrase was to test a hypothesis of generative grammar. Patte’s (2003) doctoral dissertation gives a fuller picture of Lokono grammar, but as it remains unpublished, is not readily available. Both dissertations describe the Surinamese dialect of Lokono. Up until today there is no linguistically sound description of the Guyanese dialect. Patte has also produced a number of articles, chapters on specific topics (e.g., Patte 2002; 2005; 2009; 2010; 2014).

Lexicographical works include the already mentioned historical Lokono-German dictionary (Schumann and Schumann 1882a), but also a few modern dictionaries of varying sizes. For the Guyanese dialect, there is a quite comprehensive dictionary by Bennett (1989). Also originating in Guyana are the lists of Lokono names of fauna and flora by Fanshawe (1947; 1948; 1949; 1950), reprinted recently as Fanshawe (1996). For the Surinamese dialect, there are two small dictionaries printed as part of Pet’s (1987) dissertation and the course book by van Baarle and colleagues (1989). Finally, Patte published a dictionary, which is a compilation of the previous lexicographical work and her own data (Patte 2011).

2.3.2 Literacy materials

As is the case with many Amerindian languages, one of the first materials ever produced in Lokono were translations of biblical texts. An overview of the mostly unpublished translations of parts of the Bible is given in the online Lokono catalogue (Appendix I), and in other publications (e.g., Baarle 1999; Benjamin 1987; Ziel et al. 2009). Here I want to mention only the recent works that contribute to the development of the Lokono language today.

In the 1970s, the Instituut voor Taalwetenschap in Suriname, the Surinamese branch of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, produced a number of texts in the Lokono language. Many of these texts are Lokono stories about events from daily life told by the inhabitants of different villages. Others are tales from the life of Jesus. All the texts come with a Dutch translation, often accompanied by drawings, suggesting that they were written for a younger audience. All these texts are today available online from the webpage of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, and have also been deposited in the Archive of the Lokono Language (see Rybka 2014a and § 2.3.5). Traditional Lokono stories have also been published in a few different publications (Baarle et al. 1989; Bennett 1995; Boven et al. 1989; Patte 2012).

15 In this section, I highlight only the most important work on Lokono. For more references on the Lokono language, the reader should consult the online Lokono catalogue in Appendix I.
Another evangelical organization, the Global Recordings Network, created digital recordings of short Bible stories told by anonymous Lokono speakers. The recordings are of high quality, and the stories are told in a natural, story-telling manner. The recordings can be found on the webpage of the Global Recordings Network, together with a free translation, and in the Archive of the Lokono Language. A modern translation of the Testaments, however, has never been taken up, apparently due to the small size of the community of speakers, and the ongoing and conspicuous shift to both lingua francas and the official languages. Attempts to attract Bible translation organizations on the part of the religious groups in the villages did not bring a change. One such organization Adajali Wabaroseng ‘God is Our Chief’, based in the village of Matta, Suriname, has been struggling with this problem for a couple of years now. In 2009 supported by the Surinaams Bijbelgenootschap ‘Surinamese Bible Society’, and Summer Institute for Linguistics, Adajali Wabaroseng recorded a number of new recordings of biblical stories told by fluent elderly speakers. The recordings were later distributed in the form of CDs in the community; the recordings from the workshops can be found in the Archive of the Lokono Language (§ 2.3.5).

The literacy materials available in Lokono also include Lokono songs that were published either as separate publications, or as part of larger volumes (Baarle et al. 1989; Bruin 1992; Penard and Penard 1925). Lokono songs were also recently made popular in Suriname by the Lokono band Kurupa, named after the Lokono village Korhopa (known as Matta in Sranantongo), from which many members of the formation originate. The band released songs that became immediate number-one hits in Suriname, and even reached the Dutch audience in the Netherlands. This resulted in collaborations with famous Surinamese artists such as Kayente.

However, most literacy materials mentioned here have not been made available to the Lokono people. The availability of literacy materials is therefore very limited. Only in a few households have I seen one or two publications in Lokono, usually a copy of one of the short stories of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. It is therefore a prerogative to make the existing linguistic heritage more accessible to the communities.

2.3.3 Orthography standardization

One of the main obstacles that the Lokono community struggled with for a long time when it came to language development, was the lack of a common orthographic standard. To be more specific, the problem was not that there had been no written work on Lokono that could be adopted as a standard. As already clear from sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, and as the online catalogue further illustrates, there were in fact quite a few researchers who worked on the language, coming both from within and from outside the community of speakers, and many of them produced written

18 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NumRnEUQsow.
materials in Lokono. However, each of them adopted their own way of putting the sounds of the language on paper. More importantly, none of these orthographies was ever popularized among the speakers themselves. The authors also paid little attention to explaining the writing rules to the potential readers who are speakers of an unwritten language. In (5) I give an example of the spelling differences between three authors who worked on the language in the last forty years (these are only orthographic differences; the pronunciation is the same).

(5) (a) tsjâdèng ‘sting’ (Baarle et al. 1989)  
(b) thiadyn ‘sting’ (Pet 1987)  
(c) thiadun ‘sting’ (Patte 2011)

I do not discuss the orthographies in detail here, nor the new standard, which is described in Rybka (2013), and is available online. It should be said, however, that it is almost identical to the spelling used in recent publications by Patte. It is worth explaining that there were two types of differences between the different writing systems: those stemming from an erroneous linguistic analysis (e.g., the lack of recognition of long vowels in the work of Pet) or those stemming from an arbitrary choice (usually biased by the linguistic background of the author, as in the case of the palatalized consonants in the work of van Baarle). The former type of differences could be dealt with by improving the analysis of the phonological system of Lokono. The latter, however, are a matter of agreement, and therefore could only be dealt with by discussing what the majority of the Lokono prefer.

The Lokono recognized the lack of a common standard and the problems it entailed. I was first confronted with it in 2009 by a group of women in Apoera—a town on the Surinamese side of the Corentyne River—who were trying to organize a Lokono language course, and found themselves puzzled at how to write their language. A year later, I started working with Kayeno, a Lokono organization in French Guiana, on a common orthographic standard for the Lokono in all three Guianas. Together, we decided on a publication that would:

(6) (a) present the orthographic rules.  
(b) prefer simpler rules with less exceptions.  
(c) reflect the Lokono phonological system.  
(d) explain why these rules are “better” than those in other publications.  
(e) reach the speakers in the Guianas.  
(f) be freely available to everyone.  
(g) involve the community in the creation process.

When the first draft was ready, a week-long workshop was organized to receive feedback from the representatives of the Surinamese and French villages, as well as the Vereniging van Inheemse Dorps hoofden in Suriname ‘Association of Amerindian Village Chiefs in Suriname’. The latter were at the time working on a bilingual mathematics program, which would also make use of the new standard (see § 2.3.4). At the same time, workshop participants decided to set up a foundation to preserve their linguistic and cultural heritage, called Wadian Bokotothi ‘Language Keepers’. In June 2012, the representatives of Wadian Bokotothi and Kayeno
gathered in Georgetown, Guyana, where the orthography was presented to the Guyanese Lokono. Finally, in 2013, the publication entitled Samen Schrijven in het Arowaks ‘Writing Together in Lokono’, sponsored by the Gesellschaft für bedrohte Sprachen ‘Society for Endangered Languages’, was published in Suriname in 1200 copies. The book was distributed for free in the villages during one-day long orthography workshops, during which the content of the publication was introduced to the participants. A report of the whole process can be found on the webpage of the Gesellschaft für bedrohte Sprachen.\(^\text{19}\) The book was also immediately made available online for download, for those Lokono who have (mostly mobile) access to the Internet.\(^\text{20}\) The book was also received with great enthusiasm in the Netherlands, and was used as one of the materials during a Lokono language course in Amsterdam (§ 2.3.4). In the first months of 2016, the book will be reprinted in English, and distributed among the Guyanese Lokono, thanks to a grant form the Endangered Languages Fund.

2.3.4 Language education

In all three Guianas, and in the Netherlands, there have been recent attempts at developing learning materials, and organizing Lokono classes. Lack of a common writing standard has until now hindered progress in this domain. Therefore there are still no modern Lokono teaching materials for children. The recent developments in orthography standardization described above will change the situation. Nonetheless, the Lokono organizations have not been idle.

In French Guiana the organizations Kayeno, based in Saint Rose de Lima, Hanaba Lokono, located in Saint Laurent, and Cécilia Tokorho, from the village Cécilia, have been working on educational materials (e.g., collections of stories, phrase books). However, due to limited funding, few of these projects have been accomplished. Kayeno, which has a long record of cultural activities, has also organized occasional classes in local schools, focusing on the Lokono material culture rather than the language. In October 2013, the French organizations prepared an international Lokono seminar attended by Lokono language activists, linguists, and policy makers from the three Guianas in order to tighten international cooperation. Importantly, there are modern educational materials on Lokono in French: van Baarle, Sabajo, and Patte (1997) and Patte (2008), the former of which is a translation of van Baarle and colleagues (1989)—a Lokono language course in Dutch. However, the content of both works is not suitable for a language course, but rather intended as self-study materials for a mature readership. There is also a Lokono-French dictionary, which is mostly a compilation of previously published, but less available, lexicographical work on Lokono (Patte 2011).

In Guyana, since the times of Father John Bennett, who wrote a Lokono-English dictionary and a small course book, no modern language educational materials have been developed (Bennett 1989; 1995). This is an important gap since the government is eager to support Lokono classes in the settlements. In September

\(^{19}\) http://www.uni-koeln.de/gbs/Berichte/RybkaA rawak.pdf.
2013, Father Jones Richards, a fluent speaker of Lokono and an avid Lokono activist, aided by the Guyanese Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, started a ten-month long Lokono course in Capoey village, using Bennett’s materials. The Lokono classes took place three times a week after school, and were attended by children from 5- to 10-years-old. This pilot project is part of a new initiative of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, called the Arawak Language Project. It remains to be seen whether the project will continue, and spread to other villages.

In Suriname, since 2008 the Vereniging van Inheemse Dorpshoofden in Suriname ‘Association of the Amerindian Village Chiefs in Suriname’ in collaboration with a Dutch organization called Rutu Foundation has been developing bilingual educational projects, inspired by the Maya and the Garifuna (Arawakan) schools in Belize. The project Natuurlijk Rekenen ‘Counting Naturally’ started with the development of bilingual and culturally appropriate materials for basic mathematics in Kari’na, and was piloted in two Kari’na villages in 2010. In 2011, a Lokono pilot was launched in Powakka and Washabo. The linguistic context of the Kari’na and Lokono classrooms is, however, different. The children who attend the classes in the Kari’na villages speak Kari’na; therefore teaching them mathematics in Kari’na improves their results at school. Lokono is already a heritage language to the children who attend the classes in the Lokono villages; therefore teaching them mathematics in Lokono is a way of teaching them their heritage language. The Lokono specialist responsible for the contents of the mathematics books has also published a short Lokono phrase book.

In the Netherlands, the Lokono community actively collaborated first with Peter van Baarle. This led to the publication of a course book, containing a small dictionary and a few texts (Baarle et al. 1989), which was later translated into French by Patte (Baarle, Sabajo, and Patte 1997). However, the book was designed as a self-study material rather than part of a course, and is written for a mature audience, not for children. In the spring of 2014, a Lokono language course was organized in Amsterdam by the Lokono diaspora organization Amazone Khonanong ‘People of the Amazon’. The course was designed and taught by the present author, and was video-recorded, and published on YouTube in order to reach a wider audience.” 21 The participants were twenty ethnic Lokono adults who do not know their heritage language anymore. Similar activities in the Guianas are still hindered by the lack of modern educational materials and the lack of Lokono teachers.

2.3.5 Archive of the Lokono language

In July 2014, the Archive of the Lokono Language (henceforth ALL) was set up, as a “lasting multimedia digital record of the language” (Gippert, Himmelmann, and Mosel 2006:1). The aim of ALL is to provide a platform where all data on Lokono can be deposited, stored securely, and made available to both researchers and communities. It includes language materials in formats such as audio and video, scans of written documents, and photographs. All files come with metadata,

---

21 Course materials are available at: [http://thiscourse.com/uva/lok01/wi14/](http://thiscourse.com/uva/lok01/wi14/)
The first class is available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQ8nkOoMlCk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQ8nkOoMlCk)
including information about the creator, the consultants, the date and location of the recording, the topic and so forth. The archive includes at the moment mostly materials documenting the Eastern dialect collected since 2009 by the present author, which include speech genres such as:

(7) (a) Lokono animistic folklore.
(b) Instructional narratives concerning subsistence practices.
(c) Personal narratives telling the life stories of the speakers.
(d) Descriptions of places within the village territories.
(e) Elicitation sessions focused on spatial language.
(f) Translation sessions.
(g) Scans of publications.
(h) Educational materials.
(i) Biblical stories in Lokono.

Many of the files are accompanied by Lokono transcripts, and sometimes Dutch or English free translation. Beside these data, the archive also includes scans of older Lokono documents and recordings created by other authors who have agreed to deposit their data in the archive, for instance, the already mentioned Global Recordings Network and the Summer Institute of Linguistics. The Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, hosts the archive, which can be accessed online through the portal of The Language Archive. Some parts of the archive will be open to the general public without restrictions, while for other parts a password will have to be obtained from the archive’s curators. There are also recordings in the archive that pertain to culturally sensitive knowledge that can only be accessed by a limited number of people. At the moment, the communities from which the recorded speakers come are discussing the details of the accessibility protocol.

A large part of ALL contains data documenting the Lokono geographic knowledge, which are part of the present author’s Ph.D. research. Within this project, the present author looks at the way natural environment is divided into geographical features in the Lokono language. In other words, what landscape terms (common terms) and place names (proper terms) exist in Lokono: What are their denotations? What are their connotations? What morphosyntactic features do they exhibit? How are they related to one another and do they form a language-externally definable class? (see Bohnemeyer et al. 2004; Burenhult and Levinson 2008; Mark et al. 2011). The data also zoom in on the cultural and social importance of landscape. The ultimate goal of the project is to determine what constitutes Lokono

22 http://tla.mpi.nl/. The Archive of the Lokono Language is located under Donated Corpora.
23 This part of ALL reflects the preoccupation with land among the Amerindians. In Guyana the Amerindians have, at least in theory, full control over their territories, although in practice big companies are encroaching on their territories often without the Amerindians’ permission. In Suriname the government is reported to give away Amerindian land to mining and logging companies without the inhabitants’ consent and often knowledge (Kambel and MacKay 1999). Irrespective of the legal situation, the Amerindians of the Guianas are striving
geographical knowledge and what role language plays in this system. This subpart of the ALL zooms in on the Surinamese dialect, in particular the expression of landscape in the speech of the Lokono people living in the Para district, Suriname. The data include elicitation sessions focusing on the grammar of space with tabletop arrangements (Rybka 2010), as well as elicitation sessions focused on geographic-scale phenomena, for instance, landforms, vegetation assemblages, and water features (Rybka 2014b; 2015b). The data contain also a number of narratives about particular places within the territory of Cassipora village, and their cultural significance to the people. This part of ALL forms the basis for the description of the linguistic encoding of landscape given in this thesis.

Another interdisciplinary project exploring Lokono knowledge systems is the initiative started in 2007 by the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, the Netherlands. The project’s main aim was to study its Surinamese collections from a plurivocal angle, thereby enhancing our knowledge of the artifacts and their contexts of use (Buijs, Hovens, and Broekhoven 2010). The project opened up the museum’s depots to a group of representatives of the Amerindian people, and discussed the collections with them during consultation sessions. Following Wayana and Kari’na in 2007, and Trio and Kari’na in 2009, in 2010 the representatives of the Wayana and the Lokono were invited. During week-long consultations, the Lokono experts together with specialists on Amerindian cultures of Suriname (archeologists, anthropologists, and linguists, including the present author) discussed a number of artifacts.24 The Lokono experts provided add-on commentaries concerning, among other things, ritual objects, feather collections, headdresses, clubs, and musical instruments, with particular focus on the Lokono names for the materials, techniques of production, and uses of the artifacts. The consultations were filmed, and the present author is negotiating the depositing of the videos in the Archive of the Lokono Language.

to demarcate their territories. This applies to the Lokono as well. In 2010, the Lokono villages in West Suriname presented their first results: a map, a report of archival research concerning the settlement of the area (Jong 2007), and a book describing the modern Amerindian forms of land use (VIDS 2008). Later, in 2010, the Surinamese Lokono attended a cartographic training in Rio Branco, organized by Instituto Internacional de Educação do Brasil. In 2012, Amazone Conservation Team organized a similar workshop in Suriname. In 2014, another demarcation training took place in the village of Pierre Kondre, Para district, Suriname.

24 The collaborations between the Amerindian communities and museums are also taking root in the Guianas. In 2012, the Musée des Cultures Guyanaises ‘Museum of Guyanese Cultures’ in French Guiana, the Stichting Surinaams Museum ‘Surinamese Museum Foundation’ in Paramaribo, and the Museo Paraense Emilio Goeldi in Belem organized a heritage workshop in order to discuss with the Amerindians the preservation of historical and cultural heritage. As part of the project, the digitized collections of the museums are also being deposited on computers in the villages for the communities to browse through and comment on.
2.4 Conclusions

In the sections above, I looked at a number of factors that are crucial to the assessment of the vitality of a language. I used UNESCO’s framework, which applies the following ranking system:

\[
\begin{array}{l}
0 = \text{extinct} \\
1 = \text{critically endangered} \\
2 = \text{severely endangered} \\
3 = \text{definitely endangered} \\
4 = \text{unsafe} \\
5 = \text{safe}
\end{array}
\]

The scores are summed up in Table 5 below. They have been presented by country, although the differences between the three nation-states are not of great importance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of speakers</th>
<th>guyana</th>
<th>suriname</th>
<th>fr. guiana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational language transmission</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domains of use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Shifts in domains</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Response to new domains</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language attitudes and policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Governmental/Institutional</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Community’s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language documentation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy and educational materials</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vitality of languages varies widely depending on the different situations of speech communities. The need for documentation also differs under varying conditions. Languages cannot be assessed simply by adding the numbers; we therefore suggest such simple addition not be done. Instead, the language vitality factors given above must be examined according to the purpose of the assessment.

UNESCO (2003:17, original emphasis)

In keeping with the above, it is important to make explicit the aim of the assessment. The aim of this chapter is to facilitate cooperation between the Lokono communities and researchers. It is therefore important to establish the trajectory, in which the vitality of Lokono is changing. Let us, therefore, look at the scores in Table 5 from a diachronic perspective. This angle reveals two different trends in the factorial
analysis. On the one hand, we see a decrease in scores of the following four factors: number of speakers, intergenerational language transmission, shifts in domains, and response to new domains. On the other hand, there is on the whole an increase in scores of the remaining factors—that is, governmental and institutional attitudes, policies, availability of literacy and educational materials, and language documentation.

It is important to notice that the first three factors reflect the state of the language itself. Lokono is clearly critically endangered. The community of speakers is shrinking, the language is not transmitted to children anymore, its domains of use are limited, and it is inactive with respect to new domains. The other four factors reflect the involvement of all parties in improving this very state. The language attitudes in the community are becoming more positive; the speakers are becoming more aware of language loss, and are beginning to take steps to revive their language. The governmental attitudes are improving, although clear differences between theory and practice still exist. Finally, language documentation and language development activities are slowly gaining momentum.

The question remains whether this positive trend can counterbalance the negative one, and what the focus should be in order to maximize the outcomes of future projects. Clearly, at the moment the biggest challenge for the Lokono communities is the lack of professional Lokono educational materials. The creation of such materials should therefore be prioritized. The language has been documented enough to allow for the development of such materials, based on the available grammars and the primary linguistic data amassed in the Archive of the Lokono Language. The second obstacle that the Lokono face is the lack of skilled teachers. The teachers who work in Lokono villages are either not Lokono, or are from the cohort that already shifted to other languages. The Lokono organizations listed in Appendix II are interested in collaboration with researchers in order to document and develop the Lokono linguistic and cultural heritage further. The emerging Archive of the Lokono Language is a result of such collaboration, and will hopefully facilitate future work aimed at revitalizing Lokono, on the one hand, and stimulate further research on the Lokono language and culture, on the other.