Gender agreement in Huni-Kuin Portuguese noun phrases

Concordância de gênero em sintagmas nominais do Português Huni-Kuin

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Abstract: This work presents the first description of the variable gender agreement in nominal phrases in Huni-Kuin Portuguese, which is the specific Brazilian Vernacular Portuguese variety used as second language by the Huni-Kuin people (which belongs to the Panoan ethnolinguistic family). Our corpus was extracted from eight spontaneous speeches collected during a fieldtrip to the cities of Cruzeiro do Sul and Marechal Thaumaturgo, and five villages of the Breu River Reserve. We analyzed the presence/absence of gender agreement in modifiers/determiners considering different word classes (articles, adjectives, possessive pronouns, quantifiers) and the gender of the noun head (masculine/feminine). We could observe that the overgeneralization of the masculine gender (unmarked) is not the only strategy that makes gender agreement in Huni-Kuin Portuguese distinct from L1 speakers’ patterns. In the class of possessive pronouns, it seems possible to represent the gender of a human possessor. Structures indicating that the gender of a modifier/determiner in Huni-Kuin Portuguese can be conditioned by the noun head of an embedded adjunct were also identified. This process suggests the transfer of a Panoan

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characteristic: a strong relation between the right border of a linguistic form and the expression of core grammatical functions.

**Keywords:** Amerindian-Portuguese; Huni-Kuin Portuguese; gender agreement.

**Resumo:** Este artigo apresenta uma primeira descrição da concordância variável de gênero nos sintagmas nominais em Português Huni-Kuin (a variedade linguística utilizada como segunda língua pelo povo Huni-Kuin, pertencente à família etnolinguística Pano). Com base em oito depoimentos espontâneos coletados durante trabalho de campo nos municípios acreanos de Cruzeiro do Sul e Marechal Thaumaturgo, assim como nas cinco aldeias da Terra Indígena do Rio Breu, foi feita a análise da presença/ausência de concordância de gênero em modificadores/determinantes, levando-se em consideração as diferentes categorias gramaticais (artigos, adjetivos, pronomes possessivos, quantificadores) e o gênero (masculino/feminino) do nome núcleo. Foi possível observar que a generalização do masculino (a forma não-marcada) não é a única estratégia possível no que tange a configurações de marcação de gênero distintas daquelas adotadas pelo falante de L1. Parece haver a possibilidade, no terreno dos pronomes possessivos, de representação do gênero de um possuidor humano. Foram identificadas, ainda, algumas estruturas indicativas de que em Português Huni-Kuin o gênero de um modificador/determinante pode ser estabelecido pelo nome núcleo de um adjunto encaixado. Nesse último caso, cabe postular um processo de transferência de um traço das línguas Pano: a relação entre a extremidade da direita de uma forma linguística e a expressão de categorias gramaticais fundamentais.

**Palavras-chave:** Português-Indígena; Português Huni-Kuin, concordância de gênero.

1 **Introduction**

In Brazilian Vernacular Portuguese, there is variation in the overt plural number agreement between a noun head and its modifiers and/or determiners. Its speakers tend to express the morpheme −s, which indicates plural, only in the first item of the noun phrase rather than in all its constituents as
in Standard Portuguese (this well-known phenomenon was investigated by Scherre 1994, among many others).

On the other hand, overt gender agreement in all constituents of the noun phrases can be characterized as categorical in such variety. This was appointed by Holm (2008: 92, 101) in his analysis of the BVP partial restructuring. However, there are a few Brazilian dialects that do not fit such description. One of them is the traditional dialect of Cuiabá (the capital of the Mato Grosso State) and its neighboring cities. Showing a variable gender agreement, the grammar of this variety allows feminine noun heads to be associated to masculine forms of modifiers, such as in (1) casado com meu irmã [‘married with my sister’] (Lima 2010) or (2) é pai desses duas criança mais novo meu [‘he is father of my younger two kids’] (Dettoni 2005). In fact, (1) contains the masculine first person possessive pronoun meu referring to the feminine noun head irmã (= sister), instead of the feminine form – minha, while in (2), there is a feminine noun head criança associated with a numeral in the feminine form (duas), but with a set of masculine forms: a demonstrative (desses, instead of dessas), an adjective (novo, instead of nova) and a possessive pronoun (meu, instead of minha). Dettoni (2005) analyzed anaphoric constructions in the traditional dialect of Cuiabá, describing the variation between ela (feminine)/ ele (masculine) as third person singular pronouns associated to feminine lexical items.

The other BVP varieties in which variable gender agreement is observable are deeply related to linguistic contact situations, either diachronically or synchronically. The dialect named Afro-Brazilian Portuguese, given its sociohistorical background, belongs to the first group (cf. Lucchesi, Baxter and Ribeiro 2009). It corresponds to specific rural varieties spoken by direct descendants of African slaves, who remain living in isolated communities (Quilombos) established by their ancestors. Especially among the elderly members of these groups, as verified by Lucchesi (2009), structures similar to (1) and (2) are possible. He registered the parallel use of feminine noun heads with feminine determiners (as in (3) trabalho na minha terra, ‘I work in my land’) and NPs without overt gender agreement (as in (4) cada um tem um natureza, ‘each one has one nature’) (Lucchesi 2009: 307-8). The bolded indefinite article in (4) assumes the masculine form um, instead of the feminine – uma.

Characterized by current language contact situations, the second group of BVP dialects showing variable gender agreement encompasses all varieties used as second language by Native Brazilian peoples. The way speakers of these Amerindian varieties express linguistic categories that do not belong to the grammar of their mother tongues (what is precisely the case of gender
in Portuguese) assumes a particular relevance and often reveals processes associated to L2 acquisition universals or, on the other hand, strategies involving some degree of transfer of L1 characteristics. Even though the great majority of these varieties is far from being described, a growing interest in their study has continuously been verified. A few examples among the vast universe of Amerindian Portuguese varieties are given in the next paragraphs.

Speakers of a Jê language living in the state of Pará, the Parkatejê, avoid feminine forms in modifiers and determiners (cf. Ferreira 2005). Hence, they overgeneralize masculine forms the unmarked element of the Portuguese gender system, in which masculine forms such as *elas* (3rd person plural pronoun) are selected when there are referents/noun heads belonging to both genders. Feminine gender forms (such as *elas*) are used only in contexts containing feminine referents. We can infer that this overgeneralization of masculine forms is a consequence of a universal of L2 acquisition.

Christino and Lima e Silva (2012) verified that Kaingang Portuguese admits structures such as (5) *palavras empregadas do Português*, ('words borrowed from Portuguese'), including a feminine noun head (*palavras*) modified by a masculine form of an adjective (*emprestado*, instead of *emprestada*). They speak a Jê language as their mother tongue, the Kaingang are inhabitants of Southern Brazil (namely the states of Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul)\(^2\).

The state of Pernambuco is home to the Fulni-ô, whose first language is classified as belonging to the Macro-Jê stock. Observing their specific Portuguese dialect, Costa (1993) also reported a variable gender agreement.

An analysis of the variable gender agreement in the contact variety shared by six native Brazilian peoples in the Upper Xingu River Reserve was carried out by Macedo & Lucchesi (1997). The examples they provide also show feminine noun heads in association with masculine forms. As we will demonstrate in the remaining sections, such combination is not the only possible configuration for the absence of overt gender agreement in Huni-Kuin Portuguese. Corresponding to the specific BVP dialect used as a second language by the Huni-Kuin people, this variety can associate masculine noun heads to feminine forms of determiners/modifiers.

The aim of our investigation is to provide the first description of gender agreement in Huni-Kuin Portuguese noun phrases based on the analysis of

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\(^2\) There are also Kaingang groups in the state of São Paulo that have experienced a process of language substitution and presently speak only Portuguese.
eight spontaneous speeches recorded during a field trip to the cities of Cruzeiro do Sul and Marechal Thaumaturgo, as well as to five villages in the Breu River in January, 2014.

This paper is structured as follows: section 2 has a brief description of the Huni-Kuin people; section 3 focuses on grammar peculiarities of Huni-Kuin Portuguese such as plural marking on the right end of the noun phrases; section 4 analyzes gender agreement in Huni-Kuin noun phrases, taking into consideration the differences between constructions with masculine and feminine noun heads, as well as how each determiner/modifier word class behaves. Finally, section 5 presents our conclusions and final remarks.

2 The (self-defined) bilingual and bicultural Huni-Kuin

Also known as Kashinawa, the Huni-Kuin (self-denomination that means ‘the authentic men’ in their language) live in the Amazon forest, on the Brazilian-Peruvian border on the Upper Juruá River Basin and also on the Purus River Region. As other Brazilian Native peoples, they had to face a very violent and tragic past of slavery and genocide. In their history, this extremely unfair situation started during the rubber boom in the turn of the 20th century (cf. Christino 2007).

Untill the early 1980s, they were dominated by the extremely violent rubber plantation owners. From then on, they have (re)conquered their rights, which include the establishment of 12 reserves on the Brazilian side of the border (located in the state of Acre). Presently, they are more than 7,500 individuals, 80% of them bilinguals in the Brazilian side of the Border, and 20% use Spanish as a second language on the Peruvian side (Aguirar 1994). Therefore, a very significant proportion of the Huni-Kuin speaks Portuguese besides hantxa kuin (self-denomination that means ‘the authentic language’), their mother tongue. Also named Kaxinawa in the Linguistics literature, it is a member of the Panoan family. Non-Amerindians do not represent the only interlocutors with whom the Huni-Kuins communicate in their second language, because Brazilian Portuguese works as a vehicular language between them and the Ashaninka (whose mother tongue is an Arawakan language), their neighbors in the Breu River. This situation can be observed even in the case of interethnic marriages.

Armando Henrique Kaxinawá, who used to work as a teacher in the Glória de Deus Reserve, highlighted that every child in his community is able to communicate in Portuguese without feeling disquiet and enumerated all the possible origins of interlocutors who use this language.

3 We would like to thank FAPERJ (Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro) for the financial support that made this research trip possible.
Aqui tudo criança já é sabido falá português [...] nós insina muito bem [...] tem ota criança que num fala português aí chora com medo gente, fica nervoso, aqui num nervoso mais não, tudo a hora que a pessoa vem pra cá, conversá cuns parente..ou [...] cuns brancos, ou se é o ashaninka, os peruano (Armando Henrique Kaxinawá, Glória de Deus Reserve, recorded by the author during a field trip in 2014)

[Here all the children already know how to speak Portuguese...we teach [them] very well [...] There is another kid which does not speak Portuguese, then he/she cries with fear of people, he/she gets anxious, here [our children] do not get anxious anymore, every time someone comes here, [they] can have a conversation with Indians of other ethnic groups4... or white people, or if they are Ashaninkas or Peruvians]

As the quoted statement points out, the Huni-Kuin children’s insertion in society has two levels: among their traditional community (linked with their L1) and being able to dialogue with members of other groups – non-Amerindians (coming from both sides of the Brazilian-Peruvian border) and Amerindians from some other distinct ethnolinguistic background.

As a matter of fact, the Huni-Kuins define themselves as both bilingual and bicultural. They do strive to preserve their own traditional culture, which does not imply rejecting all the elements of Brazilian or regional identities. In fact, they try to combine these two both very complex realities — being an authentic Huni-Kuin and being an active participant of Brazilian culture — searching restlessly for an ideal balance. The words of Anastácio Maia Kaxinawá (Banê), a Huni-Kuin teacher and political leader, clearly refer to that intention of achieving a cultural fusion. In the following quote, he mentions different cultural manifestations: language, dance and music, putting side by side a traditional party ritual (the mariri) and the Brazilian rhythm forró.

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4 The Portuguese word ‘parente’, that primarily means ‘relative’, is generally employed in Amerindian BVP varieties spoken in the state of Acre to indicate members of whichever other Amerindian peoples.
Eu danço também o mariri, os dois [forró e mariri], pá num esquecê e [...] ensiná tudo, né, as criança.

[...] nós tamo aprendendo língua português e ensina tambéem esse música [forró], festa, como funciona a cultura do Brasil. Assim nós tamo vivendo hoje. (Anastácio Maia Kaxinawá (Banê), Cruzeiro do Sul, recorded by the author during a field trip in 2014)

[I also dance the mariri, both [mariri and forró], not to forget [them] and to teach everything to children. We are learning the Portuguese language and teaching also this music [forró], party [how a Brazilian party is], how Brazilian culture works. So we are living nowadays.]

Another meaningful example of this bicultural/bilingual self-recognition can be identified in the emphasis given by a Huni-Kuin elderly to the parallel use of its mother tongue and the Portuguese language. He made a statement on this subject during a debate about border protection strategies of his reserve against invaders involved in illegal hunting.

Os índio entendemos o língua do nauá que tão aprendendo junto. É... os índio tão aprendendo com dois língua: a língua de que nosso mesmo, a língua de português. (Ivanildo Paulino, registered during a course for Indigenous Forest Agents promoted by the Comissão Pró-Índio do Acre)

[The Indians understand the nauá [white man] language, which they are learning at the same time [as ours]. Well... the Indians are learning with two languages: the language that are really ours and the Portuguese language.]

In this context, the Portuguese language is considered not only a tool for a broader communication, but also necessary to manage new (useful) technologies. Thus, there is an evident need and also a generalized desire to teach the children “everything” — providing them, at the same time, with tools to understand (and to participate in) the culture of the majoritarian Brazilian society and the pride of being Huni-Kuin.

Full of peculiarities, the Huni-Kuin Portuguese concretizes, at some extent, this particular Huni-Kuin way of taking part in the Brazilian society. In fact, as Maher (1996, 1998) argued, the specific BVP varieties spoken by Amerindian nations must be viewed as a relevant ethnic identity sign. The next sections deal with particular characteristics of Huni-Kuin Portuguese (henceforth HKP), trying to recognize aspects derived from universals of L2 acquisition, as well as from L1 transfer processes.

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5 We are very grateful to the Comissão Pró-Índio do Acre, a NGO responsible for such course, that kindly provided us the audio record.
The uniqueness of Huni-Kuin Portuguese (HKP)

Our ongoing research on the morphosyntax of Huni-Kuin Portuguese has been identifying a set of grammar particularities that we briefly summarize here. Some of them, as we will show, seem to be associable to processes of transfer, reflecting, at some degree, grammar characteristics of Panoan languages. *Hantxa kuin* or Kashinawa is an SOV language with a quite agglutinative nature showing a split-ergativity case-marking system, in which first and second person pronouns assume a nominative-accusative paradigm, while noun phrases obey an ergative pattern (Dixon 1994: 86; Camargo 2005). In the ergative system, subjects of transitive clauses are the marked structure that receives the ergative case: expressed by a nasal ending or by much less common allomorphs such as –*na* or –*ni*. The absolutive case, related to subjects of intransitive clauses and direct objects of transitive clauses, has no overt morphological marking in *Hantxa kuin*/Kashinawa.

Panoan languages, such as Kaxinawa do not present agreement processes neither inside noun phrases nor inside verbal phrases. They are known by their sophisticated switch-reference systems and by showing a participant agreement in secondary predicatives (Valenzuela 2005, 2005a). In *Hantxa Kuin*/Kaxinawa, the participant agreement assumes an ergative pattern: secondary predicatives oriented to intransitive subjects or direct objects do not have any phonological markings, in contrast to those oriented to transitive subjects, which obligatorily include the suffix –*shun* (Christino 2010).

Thinking in terms of transfer, as proposed by Christino & Baxter (2013), the nature of the Kashinawa absolutive case could be an explanation for the absence of prepositions after verbal forms in some HKP sentences, such as (6) and (7). Our hypothesis is that, in such sentences, the verbal complements endowed with the semantic role of patient were built in the same way as their equivalents in Kashinawa (namely absolutives without an overt specific marker).

(6) Se nós **cuidar** nossas florestas.

(7) Eu esqueci de falar **o lixão**.

Let us compare (6) and (7) with the parallel structures in varieties of BVP spoken as L1:

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*(Abbreviations: accus: accusative; art: article; AUX: auxiliary; DEF: definite; DEM PRON: demonstrative pronoun; EXIST: existential; fem: feminine; FUT: future; indef: indefinite; INF: infinitive; masc: masculine; MOD: modal verb; pl: plural; POSS PRON: possessive pronoun; PrCONT: present continuous; PRES: present; sg: singular.)*

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(6') Se nós cuidar de nossas florestas
if 1pl to take care.INF of 1pl POSS PRON forests
‘If we take care of our forests.’

(7') Eu esqueci de falar do lixão
1sg to forget.PAST to talk about garbage dump
‘I forgot to talk about the garbage dump.’

Another syntactic characteristic of the Kashinawa language that can be recognized in some HKP sentences is the use of the SOV word-order. Among dozens of sentences in accordance with the canonical Portuguese word-order (SVO), a fluent HKP speaker can say something like (8) ele chamô a macaxera comê ‘he called us to eat cassava’ (lit. ‘he called the cassava eat’) or (9) a mãe que a gente cria. In Brazilian Portuguese, a gente, a first person plural pronoun, may function either as subject or as direct object. Native speakers of BVP interpret the relative clause in (9) que a gente cria, in a way that could be translated by “that we raise”, since the relative pronoun is considered the anaphoric substitute for mãe (mother) and the direct object of the relative clause. However, as semantic and discursive clues warn us, what the HKP speaker meant by the construction in (9) was ‘the mother that raises us’. Thus, he expressed an unequivocally SOV sentence with the purpose of indicating the role of Huni-Kuin women in their society.

Like all other Panoan languages, Kashinawa shows neither a grammar category similar to gender in Portuguese nor one similar to the articles. Christino (2013) investigated some pragmatic, semantic, morphosyntactic and syntactic factors that influence the use of definite articles in HKP. Unlike BVP varieties spoken as L1, in Huni-Kuin Portuguese definite referents without definite articles are possible. This can be observed in (10). On the other hand, some contexts in this Amerindian variety may show, roughly speaking, an overuse of the definite articles, as in (11).

(10) Cada vez tô mais conseguindo de melhorá
each time AUX more to achieve.PrCONT to improve
mais [Ø] trabalho”
more [Ø] work
‘Each time I am achieving to improve more [the] work.’

(11) Eu não tenho mais a dúvida
1sg not to have.PRES anymore DEF art.fem.sg doubt
‘I don’t have any doubt anymore.’
Among the characteristics of Huni-Kuin Portuguese not shared with BVP varieties spoken as L1, there is also a peculiar way of indicating plural number. In order to achieve a better grasp of this process, it is necessary to take into account the way the grammar category ‘number’ functions in Hantxa Kuin/Kaxinawa. Unlike Portuguese, the utterance of number (singular/plural) is not obligatory in Panoan languages. Usually, the context clarifies how many (one/more than one) items are referred to. Whenever a speaker wants to highlight the plural number, it can use the suffix –bu.

Although far from being the most used plural marking strategy in Huni-Kuin Portuguese, the addition of the plural marker –s (or its allomorphs) only on the right border of a NP occurs in the oral texts of a significant number of speakers in the corpus we have been analyzing. We could observe NPs such as (12) *outro velho–s* (‘other oldmen’) and (13) *essa pesquisa–s* (‘these researches’). The corresponding forms in Standard Portuguese would be (12’) *outro–s velho–s* and (13’) *essa–s pesquisa–s*, while in BVP varieties they would be (12’’)*outro–s velho* and (13’’)*essa–s pesquisa*.

As our partial results indicate, this right-only assigned plural marking strategy can be influenced by a combination of factors, some of which are related with structures from the Portuguese language. For instance, this plural marking at the right end appears to be much more common in NPs without definite articles. In addition, plural forms containing a phonic salience are more likely to have this Huni-Kuin Portuguese peculiar plural marking strategy. The role of phonic salience can be illustrated by (14) and (15).

(14) Tô **trabalhando pelo conhecimento**
1sg AUX to work PREP+ DEF.art.masc knowledge
do **meu tradições**
PREP+ DEF.art.masc 1sg POSS PRON traditions
‘I am working to know my traditions.’

(15) tempo **ancestrais perdemos muitas coisa**
time ancient 1pl to lose.PAST many things
‘We have lost many things from ancient times.’

The singular forms of the nouns highlighted in (14) and (15) are, respectively, *tradição* and *ancestral*. We can recognize the same pattern as in (15) (ending –al in singular/ending –ais in plural) in a recurring combination in HKP: (16) *erva medicinais* (which means ‘medicinal herbs’ and would be expressed as (16’) *ervas medicinais* in Standard Portuguese or as (16’’)*ervas medicinal* in BVP varieties spoken as L1).
Structures such as (16) *erva medicinais* are neither part of the input data for Brazilian Portuguese learners nor can be explained by universals of L2 acquisition. We suppose that plural markings only in the right end of a NP are possible in Huni-Kuin Portuguese due to a L1 transfer process. As for other Panoan languages, *Hantxa kuin/Kashinawa* does not allow prefixes and tends to build sentences containing large sequences of suffixes. The last elements in those chains of suffixes are the ones representing most grammatical notions, such as tense, aspect, mood, evidentiality and illocutionary force. Thus, the Huni-Kuins' L1 shows a close relation between (a) the right end of a linguistic form and (b) the expression of core grammatical notions. Our hypothesis is that this relation also characterizes NPs such as (14), (15) and (16) in Huni-Kuin Portuguese.

In our work on HKP morphosyntax, we could observe some tendencies regarding gender agreement, which will be presented in the next section.

### 4 Gender agreement in Huni-Kuin noun phrases

At this point of our research, we have analyzed gender agreement in noun phrases of a HKP corpus sample collected during fieldwork in the cities of Cruzeiro do Sul and Marechal Thaumaturgo, as well as in the five villages of the Reserve located in the Breu River in January, 2014. In spontaneous speeches of eight Huni-Kuins, we have identified 960 tokens containing determiners or modifiers that contained overt gender agreement with their respective noun-heads in sentences built by L1 speakers of BVP varieties. We could verify that in 267 of them (or 27.8%), there was an absence of gender agreement, allowing us to consider Huni-Kuin Portuguese as a linguistic variety characterized by a variable gender agreement, which is a characteristic shared with other L2 varieties of Brazilian Portuguese, especially those spoken by Native peoples, as we have pointed out above.

Unlike Afro-Brazilian Portuguese and other Amerindian BVP varieties already mentioned, in Huni-Kuin Portuguese speakers can also combine masculine noun heads with feminine forms of determiners/modifiers. Even though this kind of structure does not reach a quarter of the tokens not showing overt agreement (57 from 267 or 21.3%), its relevance should not be underestimated, since only one of the investigated speakers did not use this combination. It is also worth noting that the association of feminine forms with masculine noun-heads cannot be explained by universals of L2 acquisition, inasmuch as it corresponds to an overuse of the marked structure in a characteristic context of unmarked ones. Table 1 shows the percentage of
tokens of masculine noun heads with feminine determiners/modifiers on each speech analyzed.

The ratio of tokens in which a masculine noun head was expressed with feminine forms of determiners or modifiers exceeded by one-fifth each five speakers (see Table 1). Among the 57 tokens of this type, only one represents a feminine modifier that follows the masculine noun head:

(17) nós bebemo também remédio
  1pl to drink.PRES too medicine (masc. noun head)
  boa
good (fem.form)
‘We also drink good medicine.’

In (17), the masculine noun head remédio (‘medicine’) comes after the feminine form of an adjective, boa (instead of the masculine one, bom). Since the structure of this NP, at the current stage of our inquiry, can be clearly characterized as an exception, we suppose that feminine forms of modifiers tend not to be expressed after a masculine noun head in Huni-Kuin Portuguese.

### 4.1 Gender agreement between articles and their noun heads

So far, we have been considering the tokens not showing an overt gender agreement, despite of their structural differences. Now, we proceed to the
description of their behavior according to their respective word classes. It is useful to warn the reader that we have separated definite articles and their contractions with prepositions (do, da, no, na). There are morphosyntactic processes in Huni-Kuin Portuguese, previously investigated by us, which suggest that contractions are perceived by its speakers in a particular way, sharply differentiated from the treatment given to definite articles not linked to prepositions (cf. for example, Christino & Baxter 2013; Christino 2013).

With the intention of illustrating this particular nature attributed to contractions in HKP, we would like to stress that the corpus includes the NP (18) “artesanato des conta” (‘bead handwork’), whose constituent des can be decomposed as “de” + “–s”, or “preposition” + “plural morpheme”. Because of the absence of a definite article between them, such structure would never be expressed by a Brazilian Portuguese L1 speaker. Its words could only be (18’) artesanato da–s conta, containing a contraction with the feminine form of the definite article a or (18”) artesanato de conta(s), showing an adjunct with an NP not characterized by definiteness. We have already concluded that (18) is not a hapax legomenon since the elderly man that formulated the above mentioned statement, “os índio tão aprendendo com dois língua” ['The Huni Kuin are learning with two languages'], also referred to the urgency of protecting the environment with the words reproduced in (19), where we can easily identify two contractions with definite articles followed by one occurrence of de + –s.

\[(19)\] pa cuidá […] da

in order to to take care.INF PREP+DEF.art.fem.sg

floresta, das caça, des pesca

forest of–DEF.art.fem.pl game PREP.pl fish

‘In order to take care of the forest, of the games and of fishes.’

In terms of gender agreement, we can now compare definite articles belonging and not belonging to contractions. The group of tokens of definite articles not belonging to contractions totalled 498 examples, from which 211 are related to feminine noun heads and 287 are subordinated to masculine noun heads. Proportionally, the absence of gender agreement were five times higher among the NPs with feminine noun heads. In fact, the amount of (not contracted) definite articles linked to feminine noun heads that did not show an overt gender agreement was 47 (or 22.27%). On the other hand, the ratio of (not contracted) definite articles with masculine noun heads revealing such behavior was 12/287 (or 4.18%). All of the speakers analyzed expressed feminine noun heads after masculine forms of (not contracted) definite articles.
Three of them used this structure more than ten times. In contrast, three speakers did not formulate any tokens of (not contracted) definite articles in NPs with masculine noun heads not showing gender agreement. Taking into account that the speaker responsible for the highest amount of tokens containing (not contracted) definite articles not agreeing with masculine noun heads used them only five times, the nature of the process becomes even clearer.

In some of the tokens containing a (not contracted) definite article that does not agree in gender with the masculine noun head, there is an –a ending (the typical ending for feminine nouns in Portuguese). This could be an explanation for the presence of the feminine form of the definite article in these contexts. (20) is part of this group.

(20) A dia todo se não chove
    DEF.art.fem day (masc.noun head) all if not to rain.PRES
‘All day long, if it does not rain.’

Nevertheless, it is relevant to note that masculine noun heads with the ending –o (typical ending for masculine nouns in Portuguese) also appeared with feminine definite articles. Such situation can be illustrated by (21) and (22).

(21) A gente num dá pá amostrar a
    1pl not MOD to to show.INF DEF.art.fem trabalho
    work (masc.noun head)
‘We cannot show the work.’

(22) Beatriz nós também ajuda com as
    Beatriz 1pl too help.PRES with DEF.art.fem projeto
    project (masc. noun head)
‘Beatriz also helps us with the projects.’

From a group of 315 tokens presenting a definite article in a contraction, the amount linked to NPs with feminine noun heads totalled 206, from which almost one fifth (18.93% or 39 NPs) did not overly agree in gender with their
noun heads. All of the speakers built structures not showing gender agreement between definite articles in contractions and their feminine noun heads. The way such configurations are distributed in the corpus, though, is far from balanced: one of the speakers alone expressed 52.94% of such tokens. In only one of the speeches we could observe more definite articles in contractions not showing gender agreement with their respective feminine noun heads (3 tokens) than the ones showing this agreement (2 tokens). The definite articles expressed in contractions related to masculine noun heads consisted of a group of 190 tokens, from which only 10 (or 5.26%), produced by four speakers, did not agree in gender with their respective noun heads.

As the very similar proportions of definite articles showing and not showing agreement with masculine/feminine noun heads have indicated, definite articles inserted and not inserted in contractions reveal an almost identical behavior regarding gender agreement. Since the corpus presents only two tokens of indefinite articles inserted in contractions, we could not proceed in the analysis of indefinite articles exactly as we did for the definite ones, and we did not split them into two groups. In the analyzed speeches, we have a total of 102 tokens of indefinite articles. A subgroup of 30 tokens (expressed by six speakers) took part in NPs with feminine noun heads and 14 (or 46.66%) did not agree in gender with their respective noun heads. Five speakers did not use gender agreement in NPs with this configuration and one of them expressed more tokens containing indefinite articles not showing gender agreement with a feminine noun head (4 tokens) than the ones showing gender agreement (2 tokens).

As found in the speeches of three speakers, noun phrases with indefinite articles that did not agree with masculine noun heads resulted in approximately 7% (5 tokens in a set of 72). As we have indicated above, masculine nouns characterized by an –a ending are more likely to be associated with determiners and/or modifiers with feminine forms. Noun phrases such as that reproduced in (23) evidences this tendency among contexts with indefinite articles.

(23) Eu peguei uma pobrema
    1sg to get.PAST INDEF.art.fem problem (masc. noun head)
    ‘I got a [health] problem.’

We recall that a native speaker of Brazilian Vernacular Portuguese would say (23’) “um pobrema” (‘a problem’).
4.2 Gender agreement between adjectives and demonstrative pronouns and their noun heads

Considering the gender agreement behavior of the adjectives in the corpus, we can verify a meaningful difference between NPs with masculine and feminine noun heads. In the first group, there was only a single token of an adjective not showing an overt gender agreement from a total of 73 (or a ratio corresponding to 1.36%). On the other hand, almost a quarter of the adjectives related to feminine noun heads (24% of 100 tokens) did not agree with them, such as those in (24) and (25):

(24) mas medicina vivo lá ainda
but medicine (fem.noun head) alive (masc.form) there still

 tem bastante
EXIST.PRES a lot

‘But there is still a lot of alive medicine [= medicinal herbs] there.’

(25) água bem lindo pá
water (fem.noun head) very beautiful (masc.form) to

bebê
to drink.INF

‘Very healthy water to drink’

lit. ‘Very beautiful water to drink.’

The adjectives with the behavior illustrated by (24) and (25) — not showing gender agreement with their respective feminine noun heads — appeared in the texts of seven speakers. In (24), the feminine noun head medicina (medicine) was followed by vivo (the masculine form of the adjective meaning “alive”). Lindo (beautiful), an adjective in masculine form, was combined with the feminine noun head água (water) in (25).

We can then direct our attention to the description of gender agreement in demonstrative pronouns in the examined HKP corpus. We could observe that feminine noun heads in NPs not showing an overt gender agreement are especially frequent in contexts with this pronominal category: out of 51 tokens (expressed by 7 speakers), 17 did not agree with the respective feminine noun head. (26) and (27) belong to this subgroup.

(26) esses coisa de informação
DEM PRON.masc.pl things (fem.noun head) about information

não é fácil
not to be.PRES easy

‘These things about information aren’t easy.’
Gender agreement in Huni-Kuin Portuguese noun phrases

(27) aquele capoeira nós
DEM PRON.masc.sg clearing (fem.noun head) 1pl pranta nosso legume
to plant.PRES POSS PRON 1pl.masc vegetable
‘In that clearing we plant our vegetables.’

Structures such as (26) and (27) were used by six speakers, among which two expressed a number of demonstrative pronouns not showing gender agreement with feminine noun heads that surpassed the amount of those showing a gender agreement (respectively, 5/1 and 6/1 ratios).

Only two speakers used feminine forms of demonstrative pronouns related to masculine noun heads in the analyzed corpus. This type of structure showed 12 tokens in a set of 60 sentences containing demonstrative pronouns with masculine noun heads. In (28), the feminine demonstrative pronoun “essa” (‘this’) comes before a masculine noun head — “conhecimento” (‘knowledge’).

(28) um jovem não tem
INDEF.art.masc young man not to have.PRES essa conhecimento
DEM PRON.fem knowledge (masc.noun head)
‘A young man does not have this knowledge.’

The speaker that expressed (28) used exactly the same structure — essa conhecimento — in three other sentences. Moreover, two of its sentences contain essa conhecimento following a preposition. Despite the absence of the combination essa conhecimento in the remaining seven speeches of the corpus analyzed, we believe that this is not an idiosyncrasy, since (29), (30) and (31) were also produced by Huni-Kuins: (29) essa conhecimento ficava de longe (‘this knowledge remained aside’); (30) com essa conhecimento tudo que eu trouxe7 (‘with all this knowledge that I have brought’); (31) essa conhecimento foi relação da ciência das animais8 (‘this knowledge is related to the animals’ science’).

7(29) and (30) were enunciated by Ibã Sales Kaxinawa, an artist and researcher, and are part of the material recorded for a documentary on ritual Huni-Kuin songs and their representation in paintings, “O espírito da floresta” (‘The spirit of the forest’), by the filmmaker (and also professor from the Universidade Federal do Acre) Amilton Mattos.

8Tadeu Siã Kaxinawa, a young teacher and political leader, declared (31) during an event about Huni-Kuin culture that took place in July 2014 in Rio de Janeiro.
4.3 Gender agreement between quantifiers and their noun heads

Not showing gender agreement was quite common among quantifiers in the examined HKP corpus. We identified 69 tokens of quantifiers associated to feminine noun heads and 31 (or 44.92%) of them did not agree in gender with the respective noun head. Six of the speakers produced sentences with NPs with such configuration, and in three of them the tokens with quantifiers + feminine noun heads without overt gender agreement are the majority, namely 9 in 10 tokens, 10 in 13 tokens and 4 in 6 tokens. Such pattern — quantifier not showing gender agreement with its respective feminine noun head — can be exemplified by (32) and (33).

(32) **medicina** pra **curá** [...] **alguns**
    medicine to to cure.INF quantifier.**masc**.
    **ferida**
    injuries (**fem**. noun head)
    ‘Medicine to cure some injuries.’

(33) **então** essa **informação**
    so **DEM PRON.fem** information (**fem**.noun head)
    **todo** [...] **me** **chamô atenção**
    quantifier.**masc** 1sg.accus to attract attention.PAST
    ‘So, all this information attracted my attention.’

For those whose first language is Portuguese, the equivalent NPs would be expressed as (32’) **algumas ferida**, and (33’) **essa informação toda**. In the corpus considered, the NPs including quantifiers and masculine noun heads that diverge from the L1 pattern of gender agreement were 9 in a total of 38 (or 23.7%). We located quantifiers related to masculine noun heads in 7 speeches: three of them presented tokens without overt gender agreement (a situation illustrated by (34) and (35)).

(34) **pessoal** fala **ôtas**
    people to talk.PRES **DEM PRON.fem**
    **professor**, **alguma** **ôta**
    teachers (masc.noun head) quantifier.**fem** **DEM PRON.fem**
    **assessor**
    assistants (**masc**.noun head)
    ‘People talk to other teachers and some other assistants.’
juntos aqui muitas

parabéns nós vivemo

‘We live here together (and deserve) many congratulations.’

In (34), the masculine noun head assessor (assistant) was linked to the feminine form of the quantifier alguma (instead of algum, ‘some’). Parabéns, in (35), is also a masculine noun head and was associated to muitas (instead of muitos, the masculine form of this quantifier).

One type of quantifier, whose gender agreement patterns are quite particular in Brazilian Portuguese, deserves special attention. In Standard Portuguese, there is tudo (all), a substantive pronoun, and its adjective counterparts, which agree in gender and number with their respective noun heads: todo (masculine/singular), toda (feminine/singular), todos (masculine/plural) and todas (feminine/plural). With respect to varieties of BVP spoken as L1, tudo (without any specific gender or number marking) can also be used as an adjective pronoun, appearing on the extremity (either left or right) of the NPs. “João Lennon”, a humorous profile in Facebook that provides translations of Beatles’ song lyrics into Brazilian Vernacular Portuguese, has suggested as an equivalent for the verse from “Imagine” “imagine all the people”: (36) “imagina as pessoa tudo”. In terms of meaning, (36’) “imagina tudo as pessoa” would express exactly the same idea.

The corpus of Huni-Kuin Portuguese analyzed includes NPs with configurations similar to (36) and (36’). However, it also reveals tokens of tudo undertaking agreement strategies that are not possible among native speakers. Let us compare (37) and (38) — which could have been stated by native speakers of Brazilian Portuguese — with (39) and (40):

nós sempre vale tudo as coisa

‘We always value all the things.’

nós vamo tudo ficar pastor

‘All of us will become pastors.’

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(39) nós trabalha junto com todos
1pl to work:PRES together with all (+ plural marking –s)
terra indígena
reserve (fem. noun head) Amerindian
‘We work with all Amerindian reserves.’

(40) eu fiquei [...] com [...] também muito
1sg to become:PAST with also much (masc.)
saudade de todos
longing of all (+ plural marking –s)
meu povo
POSS PRON 1p.sg.masc people (masc. noun head)
‘I got also a lot of longing of all my people.’

We can easily verify that (40) has the same configuration as (36’): a NP formed by the quantifier *tudo* followed by a definite article and the respective noun head. In (38), there is a combination of a personal pronoun and the quantifier *tudo*, which occurs quite often in BVP varieties spoken as L1 as well. In fact, this structure can be very frequently heard and even appears in texts that intend to reproduce informal dialogues. That is the case of a tweet, whose author imagined the Governor of São Paulo State saying (41) “vou multar cês tudo”10 (‘I am going to fine all of you’).

Unlike native speakers’ speech patterns, (39) and (40) contain a plural inflected form of the quantifier *tudo*. Since L1 speakers can choose between *tudo* linked to any kind of noun head or an inflected form with gender and number marking that agrees with the noun head (e.g. *tudo as coisa* x *todas as coisa*, “all the things”). The presence of the plural marker –*s* in *tudo* in (39) and (40), associated to the absence of overt gender agreement in this quantifier, constitutes a peculiar structure.

4.4 Gender agreement between possessive pronouns and their noun heads

The gender agreement between possessive pronouns in the HKP corpus reveals not only characteristics that confirm general tendencies (recognizable by different word classes), but also an interesting peculiarity. Similar to other

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10In https://twitter.com/suamaeehhomem/status/555379997175984129.
investigated word classes, the frequency proportion of possessive pronouns not showing gender agreement with feminine noun heads is five times higher than the absence of gender agreement by NPs with masculine noun heads. The first were 33 out of 126 tokens (or 26.19%), while the group linked to masculine noun heads without gender agreement corresponds to 8 in a set of 159 (or 5.03%). All of the speakers used possessive pronouns that did not agree in gender with feminine noun heads, which contrasts with the five cases, whose texts included masculine noun heads associated to possessive pronouns without gender agreement.

It is time to approach the particular nature of possessive pronouns in the analyzed corpus. Some identified structures suggest that, in Huni-Kuin Portuguese, possessive pronouns may reflect the gender of the human possessor rather than the gender of the noun head. In order to recognize that special characteristic of possessive pronouns, let us observe (42).

(42) o viadinho cutucô aqui no
    DEF.art.masc little deer to poke.PAST here in
    meu batata da perna
    POSS PRON 1sg.masc calf (fem. noun head)
    ‘The little deer poked here in my calf.’

The speaker was narrating one of its hunting experiences and referred to his own calf using the masculine form of the first person singular possessive pronoun (meu) instead of the feminine form (minha) required by the feminine noun head (batata da perna, ‘calf’). Analogously, another male speaker of HKP corpus mentioned (43) “meu ideia” (‘my idea’), linking the feminine noun head “ideia” with the masculine form of the first person singular possessive pronoun. The specificity of (43) goes far beyond gender agreement, since it represents, in Portuguese, the transfer to speeches of an ending formula — a typical and obligatory element in Huni-Kuin traditional texts and formal oratory.

(43) só isso que é meu
    only this relative pronoun to be.PRES POSS PRON.1.sg.masc
    ideia
    idea (fem. noun head)
    ‘That is all that my idea is.’
Gender agreement oriented to the human possessor would also be an explanation for (44) tua trabalho (‘your work’). A native speaker of BVP would produce (44’) teu trabalho, with the masculine form of the second person singular possessive pronoun (as required by the masculine noun head trabalho). Given that (44) was addressed to a female interlocutor, our hypothesis is that the gender of the conversation partner determined the choice of the feminine form of the possessive pronoun (tua).

Another set of NPs identified in HKP oral texts leads us to believe that structures such as (42), (43) and (44) are not a simple random misuse of gender agreement by non-native speakers, but are indeed related to a characteristic of a human possessor. Those NPs are composed of a possessive pronoun expressed in plural surrounded by a singular noun head and its singular determiner. In fact, noun heads in such constructions are collective nouns, which can be clearly associated to a group of human possessors. We show below two examples of this process.

(45) nós tamo vendo aqui na
1pl AUX to see PrCONT here in+ DEF.art.pem
nossas comunidade Aldeia
POSS PRON.1pl fem community village
Vida Nova
Vida Nova (New Life)
‘We are seeing here in our community — Vida Nova (New Life) village.’

(46) nós queremo [...] ensiná o
1pl to want.PRES to teach DEF.art.sg.masc
nossos povo sobre a
POSS PRON.1pl masc. pl people about DEF.art.fem
educação
education
‘We want to teach our people about education.’

In (45), the collective noun comunidade (community) appears associated with the plural form of the first person possessive pronoun nossas. Concerning gender agreement, there is nothing particular in such structure: a feminine form of the possessive pronoun was correlated to a feminine noun head. Similarly, in (46), the masculine noun head “povo” (people), also a collective noun, was expressed with the plural form of the first person possessive pronoun of the masculine gender: nossos.
4.5 ‘Right-oriented’ gender agreement

As we have stated in the previous section, gender agreement related to possessive pronouns in Huni Kuin Portuguese is probably driven by a factor that does not play any role in L1 speakers’ agreement processes: the gender of a human possessor. We can also speculate that another type of structure identified in HKP does not represent random mistakes by non-native speakers’ use of gender agreement. Instead of being a random combination, NPs such as those in (47) and (48) indicate that HKP speakers followed the gender of a noun head embedded adjunct in order to shape the gender inflection of a word. Thus, there is no overt gender agreement between such word and its respective noun head. Six of the speakers formulated noun phrases of this nature, represented below by (47) and (48).

(47) os cure de 
   DEF.art.masc cure (fem. noun head) of 
   remédio é assim 
   remedy (masc.noun head) to be.PRES so

‘The cures of medicine are so.’

(48) o cassava beer de 
   DEF.art.masc cassava beer (fem. noun head) of 
   alimento pacifica saúde 
   food (masc.noun head) to pacify.PRES health

‘The cassava beer, used as food, pacifies the health.’

Exactly as *cura* in (47), *caiçuma* in (48) corresponds to a feminine noun head. This is why a native speaker of Portuguese would have joined them with the feminine form of the definite article (*a/as*). We tend to believe that the presence of the masculine form of the definite article in those contexts was influenced by the masculine gender of noun heads in embedded adjuncts, namely *remédio* (‘remedy’) and *alimento* (‘food’). In (49), analogously, an embedded adjunct containing a feminine noun head probably determined the feminine form of the definite article, even though it was directly subordinated to a masculine noun head — *preço* (‘price’).

(49) a price da borracha 
    DEF art.fem price of rubber (fem.noun head) 
    caiu 
    to drop.PAST

‘The rubber price dropped.’
Hence, we suppose that configurations such as the illustrated by (47)-(49) reveal the expression of a ‘right-oriented’ gender agreement parallel to the right-assigned plural marking observable in (12-16). Thus, we also tend to interpret them as a transfer of the Huni-Kuins’ L1 relation between the right end of a phrase and the expression of core grammatical functions.

5 Final considerations

As we have intended to demonstrate, the bilingual and bicultural Huni-Kuins have their own Brazilian Portuguese linguistic variety. Other Amerindian varieties, called “România Novíssima” by Mattos e Silva (1987, 1988), present many specificities, which can be interrelated either to L2 acquisition universals or to processes of transfer of L1 characteristics. Sentences that assume a verb-final order in Huni-Kuin Portuguese constitute an evident example of a transfer of a syntactic characteristic of Panoan languages.

With respect to gender agreement in noun phrases, we have verified in Huni-Kuin Portuguese a clear tendency to overgeneralize masculine forms, possibly related to L2 acquisition universals. Nevertheless, a small (but not irrelevant) number of masculine noun heads associated with feminine forms of determiners/modifiers indicates that the overuse of an unmarked form is not the only strategy different from L1 speakers’ patterns adopted by Huni-Kuin Portuguese regarding the gender category.

Considering the differences between word classes, we could verify that the absence of overt gender agreement occurs more frequently among demonstrative pronouns and quantifiers than among articles (specially the definite ones). Given that articles vastly outnumber the other categories of determiners/modifiers in the input data for second language learners, the low frequency of articles not showing a gender agreement can be explained as a universal of second language acquisition.

As a result of our study, we propose that gender in possessive pronouns in Huni-Kuin Portuguese can be determined by the gender of a human possessor, a process that cannot be associated to input data during L2 language acquisition. Further investigation is required to verify whether this HKP gender marking strategy (1) derives from a universal tendency to privilege semantic characteristics linked to the concrete world over strictly grammar mechanisms, or (2) reflects, at some extent, the participant agreement in secondary predicates characteristic of Panoan languages.

In this study, we have recognized two strategies in Huni-Kuin Portuguese that constitute possible transfers of the Panoan relation between the right end of a linguistic form and the expression of core grammatical functions, i.e., the plural-marking only in the last element of an NP and the gender marking in determiners/modifiers conditioned by the noun head of an embedded adjunct. The continuation of the analysis of HKP could also reveal other transfer processes of this nature.

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