Integrating Brazilian Literature and Plurilingualism to Decolonise Latin American Studies Curricula

1. Introduction

The online *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines Latin American literature as 'the national literatures of the Spanish-speaking countries of the Western Hemisphere.' Although it does acknowledge that, 'historically, it also includes the literary expression of the highly developed American Indian civilisations conquered by the Spaniards' and that 'over the years, Latin American literature has developed a rich and complex diversity of themes, forms, creative idioms, and styles,' only a brief nod to Brazilian literature appears as a separate entity: 'For a history of literature written in Portuguese in Brazil, see Brazilian literature.'[1] Without delving into the academic debate surrounding the origins of the concept of Latin America[2], this omission in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry is inconsistent with the definition of Latin America presented elsewhere. In its 'list of Latin American countries,' the region is defined as 'generally understood to consist of the entire continent of South America, in addition to Mexico, Central America, and the islands of the Caribbean whose inhabitants speak a Romance language.'[3]

The gap between how major sources like the *Encyclopædia Britannica* define Latin America and how they portray its linguistic and literary traditions reveals an outdated perspective that lacks contemporary postcolonial and inclusive viewpoints. I do not wish to attribute this flaw to the authors of the *Britannica* entry, as it reflects a broader, systemic pattern of biases rooted in historical, political, linguistic, and cultural divides; and it may also vary regionally. For instance, the US Census framework systematically distances Brazilians from the 'Latino' identification option, because it uses the term interchangeably with 'Hispanic.'[4] This systemic oversight demonstrates how even official frameworks struggle to represent Latin

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[1] Roberto González Echevarría and Ruth Hill, 'Latin American Literature,' *Encyclopædia Britannica* <https://www.britannica.com/art/Latin-American-literature> [accessed 19 March 2025].

[2] See for example, Michel Gobat, 'The Invention of Latin America: A Transnational History of Anti-Imperialism, Democracy, and Race,' *The American Historical Review*, 118.5 (December 2013), 1345–75 <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/118.5.1345> [accessed 7 March 2025].

[3] 'List of Countries in Latin America,' *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/list-of-countries-in-Latin-America-2061416> [accessed 7 March 2025]. A comprehensive literature review would be necessary to substantiate claims of the marginalisation of Brazilian perspectives within Latin American Studies. Such research would analyse the underrepresentation of Brazilian topics in prominent journals (such as *Latin American Research Review* or *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*) and the composition of international academic bodies, such as Latin American Studies Association (LASA).

[4] U.S. Census Bureau, 'About the Hispanic Population and Its Origin' <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/hispanic-origin/about.html> [accessed 19 August 2025].

America's complex realities. Responsibility for this issue lies with multiple parties, including Latin Americans themselves and the ways universities in Latin America, Europe, and North America have structured, taught, and disseminated knowledge about the region. This linguistic and cultural divide in the region was observed by Eva Canel during her visit to Brazil in 1900, where she gave lectures and published the article 'As brasileiras' ['The Brazilians'] in the Rio de Janeiro press. Canel noted the lack of knowledge about Brazil across the broader Americas:

> Não sei por que, sendo o Brasil uma das nações mais importantes da América, há de a América conhecer tão pouco as coisas do Brasil. Sabe-se que produz café; que há fumo na Bahia, que há açúcar; que há frutas tropicais e febre amarela e com isto julga-se estar no corrente dos pormenores e particulares deste país atraente e sedutor, porque a verdade é que ele enfeitiça uma pessoa, a ponto de não querer mais abandoná-lo.[5]
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> [I do not know why, Brazil being one of the most important nations in the Americas, the Americas know so little about Brazil's affairs. It is known that Brazil produces coffee; that there is tobacco in Bahia, that there is sugar; that there are tropical fruits and yellow fever, and with this, one thinks they are acquainted with the details and particulars of this captivating and alluring country, because the truth is that it bewitches a person to the point where they no longer wish to leave it.]

Canel's observation underscores how Brazil, despite its economic significance, was often reduced to stereotypes, and its rich cultural and intellectual contributions were overlooked. She highlights in her article the vibrancy of Brazilian intellectual life, particularly the achievements of Brazilian women, whom she describes as 'instruidíssimas' ['exceptionally knowledgeable'] and deeply engaged in literature, medicine, law and other professions. She singles out Júlia Lopes de Almeida, praising her as 'a escritora de mais altos voos' ['the most soaring writer'] and 'reputada a melhor prosadora do país ['reputed to be the finest prose writer in the country].'[6] Canel's frustration with the lack of awareness about Brazilian literature in Spanish-speaking America is evident. She 'lamentava, ao começar estas linhas, que tão pouco se conhece o Brasil, principalmente no Prata, que está tão perto. Conhece-se em Buenos Aires a literatura francesa e um pouco a italiana. Por que se não há de conhecer a brasileira? Por causa do idioma?' ['lamented, as I began these lines, how little Brazil is known, particularly in the River Plate region, which is so close by. In Buenos Aires, French literature is familiar, and Italian literature somewhat so. Why should Brazilian literature not be known as well? Is it

[5] Eva Canel, 'As brasileiras.' *A Imprensa*, 23 de fevereiro de 1900, p. 1, <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/docreader.aspx?bib=245038&pesq=eva%20canel&pagfis=2079> [accessed 10 October 2023].
[6] Canel, p. 1.

because of the language?'].[7] Her rhetorical question points to the linguistic barrier as a key factor in this divide, but she rejects it as an excuse, noting that Portuguese is 'uma língua doce, acariciadora e muito compreensível para quem fala castelhano' ['a sweet, caressing language, perfectly intelligible to Spanish speakers'].[8] Instead, she attributes the lack of engagement to negligence and a failure to foster intellectual exchange between the two cultures. As Canel argued, true friendship and understanding between nations require more than diplomatic visits or superficial exchanges; they demand a deep engagement with each other's literature, arts and ideas.

From the perspective of the history of international relations and ideas, Leslie Bethell echoes Canel's observations in his article 'Brazil and "Latin America",' while also acknowledging a reciprocal dynamic. For over a century after independence, Brazilian intellectuals and governments equally displayed minimal interest in the Spanish America beyond the Río de la Plata, focusing their attention primarily on Europe and, after 1889, the United States. Even during the Cold War, when the United States and others began to include Brazil within the framework of Latin America, Brazilian governments and intellectuals, with the exception of some on the Left, resisted this classification. It was only after the Cold War that Brazil began to actively engage with its South American neighbours, marking a significant shift in its regional orientation.[9] This mutual neglect underscores a longstanding disconnect between Brazil and Spanish-speaking America, rooted in differing cultural, political, and intellectual priorities. Bethell's analysis, like Canel's critique, reveals how this divide perpetuated a fragmented understanding of Latin America's cultural and intellectual landscape. While Mercosur has fostered economic integration since the 1990s, its cultural, political and economic impact remains limited, a gap that progressive Brazilian governments actively sought to bridge through pan-South American cooperation. Recent challenges like Trump-era tariffs have served as stark reminders of the unfinished project of meaningful South American unity.

As a Brazilian and Brazilianist, I must take some responsibility for perpetuating some of these systemic biases. While my work has sought to address the underrepresentation of Brazilian literature within Latin American studies curricula, I recognise that my focus has been narrow. Although I have championed non-standard varieties of Portuguese literary expression

[7] Canel, p. 1.
[8] Canel, p. 1.
[9] Leslie Bethell, 'Brazil and "Latin America",' *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 42 (2010), 457–85 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X1000088X> [accessed 7 March 2025].

in Brazil,[10] I have not equally advocated for the inclusion of non-Spanish and non-Portuguese literary traditions across the region. While this oversight is partly attributable to the structural limitations of academic departments, which often lack the resources to cover the full spectrum of Latin America's linguistic and cultural diversity, it remains a failure to fully challenge the frameworks that perpetuate exclusion. For this, I offer a *mea culpa*, before moving forward to propose a way to contribute to decolonising the curriculum. My goal is to ensure that the works of Indigenous, Black Brazilian, and non-normative European language literary expressions are central to syllabi in modules with the terms 'Latin America(n studies)' in their titles. This approach aims not only to diversify the range of literary voices represented in the modules of the Department of Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin American Studies (SPLAS) at University College London (UCL), where I teach, but also to emphasise the interconnectedness of Latin American histories with colonialism, imperialism, and racial hierarchies.

This article therefore explores the integration of Brazilian literature into Latin American studies modules as a means of decolonising the curriculum and fostering a deeper understanding of Latin American cultural and linguistic diversity. This analysis draws on a lecture delivered for the redesigned *SPAN0101: Introduction to Spanish and Latin American Studies*, a compulsory 30-credit module first offered in 2024–25 to 90 first-year students. Developed as part of the curriculum decolonisation initiative, the aim of my lecture was to examine Brazil and Paraguay's cultural-linguistic diversity through literature, with explicit pedagogical aims of challenging Spanish-language-centric frameworks. While the lecture engaged Deleuze and Guattari's 'minor literature' (1975) to analyse how marginalised Brazilian voices subvert dominant languages (Portuguese/Spanish), its broader significance lies in its structural role: as the first iteration of a mandatory course, it represents an institutional commitment to reframing Latin American studies beyond colonial linguistic hierarchies and across borders. The article thus treats this case study not as an assessed pedagogical experiment but as proof-of-concept for curriculum reform, a necessary preliminary step before evaluating student outcomes.[11]

2. Linguistic Terms and Literary Theoretical Frameworks

[10] See for example, Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva, Julio Ludemir, and Maria Aparecida Andrade Salgueiro, eds., *Contemporary Afro-Brazilian Short Fiction* (London: UCL Press, 2024).

[11] This article was submitted for publication in January 2025 during this new module's first delivery cycle, making assessment metrics and data about student reception unavailable.

A clear understanding of key linguistic and literary terms – such as accent, allochthonous and autochthonous languages, bilingualism, dialect, idiolect, monolingualism, pluricentric language, sign language, sociolect, *portunhol selvagem/portuñol salvaje*, variable mixed language, and minor literature – is crucial for understanding the complex linguistic landscape of Latin America. In a context where the enduring tension between hegemonic (Portuguese, Spanish), other immigrant (allochthonous) and Indigenous (autochthonous) languages has fundamentally shaped the region's cultural production and the diverse literary expressions. These linguistic terms serve as foundational tools for exploring the relationship between plurilingualism and literary expressions, highlighting how language shape identity, power dynamics, and cultural representation.

For instance, the distinction between autochthonous and allochthonous languages underscores the historical and ongoing tensions and cross-fertilisations between indigenous languages and those introduced through colonisation and immigration. Similarly, concepts like bilingualism and sociolect reveal the layered ways in which individuals and communities navigate multiple linguistic systems, often reflecting social hierarchies and marginalisation.[12] By examining pluricentric languages, such as Portuguese and Spanish, we can better understand how regional variations challenge the notion of a singular, dominant linguistic standard. Meanwhile, terms like *portunhol* (*selvagem*) highlight the creative resistance of borderland communities, whose hybrid linguistic practices and literary works disrupt dominant narratives and assert their cultural presence.

For an increasingly multilingual cohort of students, such as ours in the School of European Languages, Culture, and Society (SELCS) at UCL, many can relate these terms to their own linguistic and cultural journeys. Whether navigating multiple languages at home, engaging with foreign languages while travelling, or encountering for the first time the rich diversity of languages and cultures in a global city like London, these linguistic terms resonate deeply with their personal narratives.

Moving into literary theory, another crucial concept to introduce to students is that of 'minor literature,' as defined by Deleuze and Guattari. This framework offers a valuable starting point for understanding how marginalised groups navigate and reshape dominant

[12] While a clear grasp of these terms is essential for the arguments in this article, I cannot include their definitions here due to space constraints. These terms are standard within the fields of linguistics, and their precise definitions can be found in any major linguistic dictionary. See for example: Peter Matthews. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* (Oxford University Press, 2014); Kaith Brown and Jim Miller. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Linguistics* (Cambridge University Press, 2013); and International Working group on Non-dominant Varieties of Pluricentric Languages <https://pluricentriclanguages.org/pluricentricity/what-is-a-pluricentric-language/> [accessed 20 August 2025].

linguistic systems as a form of artistic expression. However, its application must be critically expanded through dialogue with decolonial scholarship to avoid a Eurocentric lens, particularly when applied to Latin American contexts.

Walter Mignolo and Madina Tlostanova's concept of 'border thinking,' a form of critical knowledge produced by people who exist on the peripheries of power.[13] They use their deep understanding of the dominant system (from being 'inside' it) to critique and subvert it from their position of 'exteriority.' This concept provides a foundation for recognising that such literary practices are not merely formal experimentation but are acts of epistemic disobedience, operating from outside the dominant system to produce subversive knowledge. This aligns with Lúcia Sá's analysis of Amazonian texts, which she frames through Fernando Ortiz's concept of 'transculturation' (a concept later revitalised by Ángel Rama and Mary Louise Pratt).[14] Sá argues against viewing these works as exotic curiosities, instead showing how they enact a dynamic, two-way process where peripheral perspectives actively determine and reshape metropolitan forms. Therefore, to truly appreciate these texts, one must see them as border thinking in practice: using the dominant language not just to critique it, but to convey alternative worldviews and produce knowledge unconstrained by the frame of Western modernity.

A student unfamiliar with Deleuze and Guattari might interpret the term 'minor literature' more literally, relying on their prior understanding of 'minor' in opposition to 'major,' particularly in the context of 'major languages.' This could lead to the assumption that it refers to literature written in the languages of smaller communities, rather than widely spoken ones. In Deleuze and Guattari's framework, three defining characteristics emerge: the deterritorialisation of language, the inherently political nature of all expression, and the collective value of individual narratives. The first characteristic, the deterritorialisation of language, refers to the process by which minority writers articulate their cultural and political realities in a language imposed by colonisers, such as Spanish or Portuguese. For these writers, the act of writing becomes a vital tool for expressing community consciousness, rendering it both urgent and unavoidable. However, this necessity often forces them to operate within a

[13] Walter D. Mignolo, and Madina V. Tlostanova, 'Theorizing from the Borders: Shifting to Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge,' *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9.2 (2006), 205–21 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431006063333> [accessed 20 August 2025].

[14] Lúcia Sá, *Rain Forest Literatures: Amazonian Texts and Latin American Culture* (University of Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 2004); Ángel Rama, *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1983); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2008)

linguistic framework that is inherently alien, a formal, distant and artificial 'paper language'[15] primarily used by the ruling class or intellectual elite. This creates a profound tension: while writing serves as a means of survival and resistance, it simultaneously alienates the artist from their native linguistic and cultural roots. This tension is emblematic of the dual nature of deterritorialisation, where the coloniser's language becomes both a medium of expression and a site of struggle. Writers are compelled to reimagine and subvert the dominant language from within, transforming it into a vehicle for articulating their unique realities.

The second characteristic, the political nature of 'minor literature,' underscores the inseparability of individual narratives from broader political contexts. In 'minor literature,' personal stories are always intertwined with larger social, cultural and political struggles. The third characteristic, the collective value of 'minor literature,' lies in its ability to transcend individual expression and resonate with the shared struggles and aspirations of a community. In 'minor literature,' what is articulated on a personal level is inherently connected to collective action, reflecting communal identities and shared experiences. This is particularly significant in countries such as Brazil, where low proficiency in reading is an indication of limited access to literary texts.[16] Artists in such contexts often serve as crucial intermediaries, amplifying the voices of marginalised groups and giving shape to collective struggles. Their works function not merely as individual stories but as 'relays for a revolutionary machine-to-come,'[17] channelling the hopes and resistance of their communities. By embodying collective voices, they transform their narratives into powerful tools for social change. This collective dimension is central to the revolutionary potential of 'minor literature,' as it fosters solidarity and communal identity in the face of systemic oppression.

In the context of multilingualism and translingual practices – which understand language practices as dynamic and interdependent across time and space, and which treat difference as the norm, not only in utterances marked as divergent by dominant ideologies but also to those defined as standard by conventional understandings of language, its relationships, and its users[18] – 'minor literature' offers a lens through which to examine how minority groups

[15] Deleuze and Guattari, p. 16.

[16] According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 results, half of all Brazilian 15-year-old students did not achieve the basic level of proficiency in reading, a figure that is nearly double the average rate of 26% among the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries. PISA 2022: 'Por que o Brasil está nas últimas posições em matemática, ciências e leitura?,' <https://futura.frm.org.br/conteudo/educacao-basica/noticia/pisa-2022-por-que-o-brasil-esta-nas-ultimas-posicoes-em-matematica-leitura-ciencias> [accessed 19 August 2025].

[17] Deleuze and Guattari, p. 16.

[18] Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner, 'Translingual Literacy, Language Difference, and Matters of Agency,' *College English*, 75.6 (2013), 582–607 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24238127> [accessed 19 March 2025].

creatively subvert and reimagine dominant languages, such as Spanish or Portuguese, to articulate their unique cultural and political realities.

3. Multilingualism contexts

Given the impossibility of capturing the full linguistic diversity of Latin America or comprehensively addressing how allochthonous and autochthonous languages interacted during the colonial period and in more recent times, an examination of Brazil's linguistic landscape alongside that of its border country, Paraguay, can serve as two illustrative examples. Brazil, often perceived as monolingual, is home to over 200 languages, including 202 living indigenous languages, 20 established non-indigenous languages, and at least twelve sign languages.[19] Paraguay's national identity is anchored in a distinctive bilingualism, with the indigenous Guaraní holding co-official status and flourishing alongside Spanish, in addition to being home to 19 other living indigenous languages and five living non-indigenous languages.[20] Both nations resist linguistic homogenisation, underscoring that multilingualism is a core, dynamic, and contentious component of national identity.

3.a) Brazil

Since the approval of Law 10,436 in 2002, Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS) has been officially recognised as a legal means of communication and expression.[21] This recognition makes Brazil officially bilingual, even if the idea of monolingualism is frequently proclaimed, and sometimes celebrated, as a positive characteristic of the country.[22] Furthermore, the idea that a unified, homogeneous Portuguese is spoken across a continental-sized country is what linguist Marcos Bagno identifies as the first myth of his 'Mitologia do Preconceito Linguístico' ('Mythology of Linguistic Prejudice'): 'Mito #1: A língua portuguesa falada no

[19] Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 'Brazil,' *Ethnologue: Languages of the World. Twenty-eighth edition*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International < https://www.ethnologue.com/browse/countries/> [acessed 19 Augutst 2025]; Silva, Diná Souza. da, & Quadros, Ronice Muller de, 'Línguas de sinais de comunidades isoladas encontradas no Brasil,' *Brazilian Journal of Development*, *5*(10), 2019, 22111–22127 <https://doi.org/10.34117/bjdv5n10-342> [accessed on 19 August 2025].

[20] Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig (eds.), 'Paraguay,' *Ethnologue.*

[21] Lei nº 10.436, 24 de abril de 2002, *Diário Oficial da União*, <https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/2002/l10436.htm> [accessed 07 March 2025].

[22] I am basing myself to write this section on Gilvan Müller de Oliveira, 'Plurilingüismo no Brasil' (Brasília: UNESCO Office in Brasilia, Instituto de Investigação e Desenvolvimento em Política Lingüística, 2008) <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000161167.locale=en> [accessed 4 September 2024].

Brasil apresenta uma unidade surpreendente' ('Myth #1: The Portuguese language spoken in Brazil demonstrates a surprising uniformity'). Bagno argues that the myth of a surprising linguistic unity in Brazil is a powerful ideological construct that serves to erase the country's immense dialectal diversity and sociolinguistic reality. This official narrative of monolingualism, used for centuries to justify repression, directly fuels the second myth Bagno describes: 'Mito #2: Brasileiro não sabe português' / 'Só em Portugal se fala bem português' (' Myth #2: Brazilians don't know Portuguese' / 'Only in Portugal is Portuguese spoken well.'), which stigmatises the vast majority of Brazilians for not conforming to an elite standard.[23]

The perception of Brazil as a monolingual nation stems from centuries of linguistic repression and policies aimed at reducing diversity. In 1500, an estimated 1,078 Indigenous languages were spoken in Brazil. However, through policies of glottocide (linguistic eradication) Portuguese was imposed as the only legitimate language. One key historical document, Marquis of Pombal*'s Diretório dos Índios* (1758), legislated Indigenous life and promoted the imposition of Portuguese as a means of 'civilising' Indigenous peoples. It mandated that only Portuguese be used in schools.

Despite this history of repression, Indigenous and immigrant communities have resisted linguistic homogenisation. Nheengatu (a language that evolved directly from Tupinambá, not as claimed by some, a creole or missionary invention[24]) was once a vital Amazonian lingua franca. Despite its remarkable resilience through centuries of contact, it experienced a sharp decline following the Cabanagem Revolution (1835–1840), which included the massacre of approximately 40,000 of its speakers, and the influx of Portuguese-speaking migrants.[25] However, it persists today in an area between Manaus and the Upper Rio Negro, covering roughly 300,000 square kilometres, and has approximately 7,200 speakers.[26]

The richness of online resources allows us to give students an immediate insight into this multilingual reality. For example, the BBC's article 'Quantas são as línguas indígenas do Brasil, onde são faladas e o que as ameaça?' provides an accessible overview of Indigenous languages in Brazil, their geographical distribution, and the threats they face (Fig.1). Students

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[23] Bagno, Marcos. *Preconceito Lingüístico: O que é, como se faz* (São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 1999).

[24] Rodrigues, Aryon Dall'Igna and Cabral, Ana Suelly Arruda Câmara, 'A Contribution to the Linguistic History of the Língua Geral Amazônica,' *Alfa: Revista de Linguística 55*(2), 2011, 613–639. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1981-57942011000200012> [Accessed 19 August 2025].

[25] See Oliveira, 2008.

[26] Centro de Documentação Eloy Ferreira da Silva, https://www.cedefes.org.br/quais-sao-as-linguas-indigenas-faladas-no-brasil/. According to the *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 'Nhengatu is an endangered indigenous language of Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela. It belongs to the Tupian language family. The language is used as a first language by all adults in the ethnic community, but not all young people. It is not known to be taught in schools.' Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig (eds.), 'Nhengatu*,' Ethnologue.*

can listen to the whistled version of Ikolen (Gavião), a Tupi-Mondé language spoken in Rondônia.[27]

Figure 1: The Ikolen (Gavião) language, part of the Tupi-Mondé subfamily, is spoken in the Igarapé Lourdes Indigenous Land in Rondônia. It includes a whistled version that mimics the tones of the spoken language. Source: *Quantas são as línguas indígenas do Brasil, onde são faladas e o que as ameaça?*, BBC News Brasil, <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/resources/idt-2779c755-7af1-495a-a41c-d02995e459b8> [accessed 10 October 2024].

They can also find videos on YouTube about Talian and Pomeranian, which are neo-autochthonous languages of Italian and Germanic origin, primarily spoken in the states of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Paraná, Mato Grosso and Espírito Santo, and about the variety of *portunhol* spoken in Rivera, Uruguay.[28]

However, this linguistic diversity has faced significant challenges. The Estado Novo regime (1937-1945) enforced policies of linguistic repression, specifically targeting German, Italian and Japanese speakers in southern Brazil. Schools and newspapers were shut down, and their use was actively persecuted, leading to a shift from written to oral usage and confining immigrant languages to rural areas (Fig. 2).

Figure 2: General Provisions Issued by the Police Chief Prohibiting the Use of Italian, German and Japanese in Public Spaces. A Época, Caxias do Sul, 1 February 1942, page 8, Hemeroteca Digital da Biblioteca Nacional. Available at: https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/docreader.aspx?bib=882089&pasta=ano%20194&pesq=&pagfis=862.[29]

Despite these setbacks, both immigrant and Indigenous languages have demonstrated remarkable resilience. Pomeranian, for instance, maintains a deep-rooted presence and vitality,

[27] 'Quantas são as línguas indígenas do Brasil, onde são faladas e o que as ameaça?,' BBC News Brasil <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/resources/idt-2779c755-7af1-495a-a41c-d02995e459b8> [accessed 10 October 2024].

[28] See, for example, *Documentary: Talian, the Forbidden Language of Brazil*, online video recording, YouTube, 2021 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rg_8yTRrfQw> [accessed 10 October 2024]; *Língua Pomerana no Brasil - História; Gramática da Língua Pomerana Capixaba*, online video recording, YouTube, 2021 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnAMOevOM4s> [accessed 10 October 2024]; and *Aquí se habla Portuñol*, online video recording, YouTube, 2021 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVHHmlbzXaU> [accessed 10 October 2024].

[29] 'Proibido falar em Italiano, alemão e japonês em qualquer lugar público. Disposições gerais baixadas pela Chefia de Polícia,' *A Época*, Caxias do Sul, 1 February 1942, p. 8, Hemeroteca Digital da Biblioteca Nacional <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/docreader.aspx?bib=882089&pasta=ano%20194&pesq=&pagfis=862> [accessed 07 March 2025].

particularly among younger generations.[30] Contemporary indigenous movements and immigrant language speakers have fought to preserve their linguistic heritage. The 1988 Brazilian Constitution marked a significant step forward by recognising Indigenous linguistic rights, fostering a more inclusive cultural landscape. This has created opportunities for bilingualism by choice, rather than imposition, allowing communities to reclaim and celebrate their linguistic diversity.[31]

3.b) Paraguay

Paraguay's linguistic history is unique in Latin America in that it is the only country where an Indigenous language not only survived but thrived alongside the colonial language, allowing them to coexist. Unlike many other regions in the Americas where Indigenous languages were suppressed or eradicated, Paraguay's linguistic landscape reflects a profound cultural exchange between Spanish settlers and the Guaraní people. This coexistence was shaped by historical factors such as limited migration and regional isolation. Between 1535 and 1600, only 1,000 to 1,200 Spanish settlers arrived in Paraguay, a small number compared to other colonies. This limited migration, combined with Paraguay's political and economic isolation, allowed Guaraní to maintain its dominance. The early interactions between Spanish settlers and Indigenous Guaraní people led to significant cultural and racial mixing, which further reinforced the integration of Guaraní into Paraguayan society. [32]

In Paraguay, the indigenous language Guaraní holds official status alongside Spanish. However, the country's daily linguistic reality is defined by Jopara (also known as Yopará), a conventionalised blend of both languages that serves as 'the default variety used by the Paraguayan public.'[33] Jopara is a variable mixed language because the ratio of Spanish to Guaraní and the specific elements used can change based on the speaker and situation.

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[30] Monica Maria Guimarães Savedra, 'Language Vitality and Transculturalization of European Immigrant Minorities: Pomeranian in Brazil,' *Diadorim*, 22.1 (2020) <https://doi.org/10.35520/diadorim.2020.v22n1a31999> [accessed 10 October 2024].

[31] For co-oficialisation of languages in Brazil, see Gean Damulakis, 'Cooficialização de línguas no Brasil: características, desdobramentos e desafios,' *Laboratório de Estudos Fluminenses (LEF-UFRJ)*, 21 December 2017 <https://lefufrj.wordpress.com/2017/12/21/cooficializacao-de-linguas-no-brasil-uma-visao-panoramica/> [accessed 04 September 2024].

[32] I am basing myself to write this section on Lenka Zajícová's 'Apuntes sobre la historia lingüística de Paraguay,' *El bilingüismo paraguayo. Usos y actitudes hacia el guaraní y el castellano* (Frankfurt: Vervuert; Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2009), pp. 23–48.

[33] Elizabeth Herring Dudek and J. Clancy Clements, 'Jopara as a case of a variable mixed language, *New Perspectives on Mixed Languages: From Core to Fringe*, edited by Maria Mazzoli and Eeva Sippola (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2021), p. 277 <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501511257-010> [accessed on 19 August 2025].

The status of Guaraní has not always been secure. In the 1920s, Guaraní was banned in schools, leading to a cultural stigma that associated the language with backwardness. This perception began to shift during the Chaco War (1932–1935), a costly conflict between Bolivia and Paraguay over the Chaco Boreal region. The war marked a turning point for Guaraní, as it was designated the 'lengua oficial de la Guerra' ['official language of the War'] in 1933.[34] This recognition transformed Guaraní from a stigmatised language into a symbol of national identity and resistance. The war also spurred a cultural revival, with a flourishing of Guaraní literature, including poetry and plays by prominent figures like Emiliano R. Fernández and Julio Correa. These works celebrated Guaraní as a vehicle for expressing Paraguayan patriotism and resilience.

In the post-war period, Guaraní continued to gain prominence, though its status remained ambivalent. The 1940s saw a surge in patriotism that boosted the language's prestige, particularly during the presidency of Higinio Morínigo (1940–1948), who actively promoted Guaraní in government and literature. This period also witnessed significant academic contributions to the study of Guaraní, including the publication of grammars and dictionaries by scholars like Antonio Ortiz Mayans and Juan Klug. The 1967 Constitution marked another milestone by recognising Guaraní as a national language, further solidifying its role in Paraguay's cultural and political life. Today, Paraguay is one of the few countries in the Americas where an Indigenous language is spoken by the majority of the population. Over 90% of Paraguayans are fluent in Guaraní, while around 87% speak Spanish, making Paraguay a truly bilingual nation.

Despite this linguistic richness, Paraguay faces challenges related to language and identity. In recent years, the expansion of Portuguese, particularly in border regions, has been viewed by some Spanish speakers as a cultural threat. This mirrors historical tensions in neighbouring Uruguay, where Portuguese-speaking minorities were once stigmatised, and efforts were made to enforce the use of Spanish in education and public life. In Paraguay, however, regional integration efforts have led to increased acceptance of linguistic diversity, though stigmatisation of non-standard language varieties persists in political and educational discourse.

4. Case Studies: Minor Literature in Brazil and Its Border Regions

[34] Genes Hermosilla, apud Zajícová, p. 42.

Following the exploration of key linguistic terms, the theoretical framework of 'minor literature' and the historical and cultural contexts of Brazil and Paraguay, this section presents three case studies that illuminate the dynamic interplay of language, identity, resistance and artistic expression in Latin America. These case studies, Itamar Vieira Junior's 'O espírito *aboni* das coisas,' Douglas Diegues' *El astronauta paraguayo,* and Leo Castilho's 'O meu nome,' exemplify how marginalised communities use literature to subvert dominant linguistic and cultural narratives.

4.a) 'O espírito *aboni* das coisas,' by Itamar Vieira Júnior

In 'O espírito *aboni* das coisas,' Tokowisa, an indigenous hero of the Jarawara people from the Middle Purús River region, embarks on a spiritual and physical journey that intertwines personal struggle with broader themes of cultural preservation and environmental interconnectedness. His mission to save his pregnant wife, Yanici, from a deadly curse serves as the narrative's driving force. Tokowisa's life is deeply entwined with the natural world of the Amazonian rainforest, and this connection is central to the narrative. The concept of 'espírito *aboni'*, which gives the short story its title, embodies the character's spiritual merging with the land, animals, and trees. This connection is not merely symbolic but is presented as a lived reality for Tokowisa and his community. The spiritual bond between humans and the natural world is evident in moments where Tokowisa communicates with the forest and its creatures, drawing strength and guidance from them. His journey is as much about navigating the physical challenges of the rainforest as it is about understanding and harmonising with the spiritual forces that govern it.

The narrative also delves into the linguistic richness of the Amazon through Itamar Vieira Junior's innovative use of language to reflect the cultural and spiritual depth of the Jarawara people. The author employs a unique syntactic construction, blending Jarawara words with Portuguese to create a layered narrative texture. For example, in opening sentence of the short story 'O sol *bahi* cresceu no céu *neme* com muita luz' ['The sun *bahi* rose in the sky *neme* with much light'], Jarawara terms like *bahi* (sun) and *neme* (sky) are italicised and paired with their Portuguese equivalents.[35]

[35] See Itamar Vieira Junior, 'O espírito *aboni* das coisas,' *Qorpus*, 11.1 (March 2021), Especial Brazilian Translation Club, p. 69 <https://qorpuspget.paginas.ufsc.br/files/2021/03/O-espirito-aboni-das-coisas_Itamar-Vieira-Junior.pdf> [accessed 7 March 2025]; and Itamar Vieira Junior, 'The *Aboni* Spirit of things,' trans. by

The author uses italics for the Jarawara language to highlight its cultural importance. This contrasts with *igarapé* and *mandioca*, which are not italicised because they are Tupi loanwords assimilated into Brazilian Portuguese. Their assimilated status made them more likely to be 'invisibly' translated: *igarapé* became 'upstream' and *mandioca* became 'cassava.'[36] The significance of *mandioca* is further emphasised in the original text, where it appears five times alongside its indigenous Jarawara equivalent, *fowa*, underscoring its deep roots in native agriculture.[37]

Source text: 'Ela tem uma matilha de cães *yome* ao seu redor e as crianças que choram querendo peixe *aba* e bolo de mandioca *fowa kabe*.' (Vieira Junior, p. 70)

Translation: 'She is surrounded by a pack of *yome* dogs and children who cry wanting *aba* fish and *fowa kabe* cassava cake.' (Vieira Junior and Meadowcroft, p 75)

Source text: 'Plantam todas as variedades de mandioca *fowa* e as deixam guardadas debaixo da terra para, quando chegar a guerra, alimentar seu povo.' (Vieira Junior, p. 71)

Translation: 'They plant every kind of *fowa* cassava and leave it safe underground so that, when the war comes, they can feed their people.' (Vieira Junior and Meadowcroft, p. 76)

Source text: 'O cesto é para que as mulheres carreguem os frutos de suas roças. Milho *kimi*, mandioca *fowa bao*, mandioca *fowa basota*, mandioca *fowa nestona*.' (Vieira Junior, p. 72)

Translation: 'The basket is so the women can carry the fruits of their labour. *Kimi* maize, *fowa bao* cassava, *fowa basota* cassava, *fowa nestona* cassava.' (Vieira Junior and Meadowcroft, p. 76)

The words *mandioca* and *igarapé*, deeply rooted in indigenous knowledge, are woven into the narrative without special emphasis, symbolising how indigenous contributions to Brazilian culture are often taken for granted. This linguistic interplay serves as a subtle critique of the erasure of indigenous heritage, reminding readers that Brazilian Portuguese is the product of a long and often violent colonial history.

The story also draws attention to the impact of colonial exploitation on indigenous lands and cultures. Tokowisa's journey is not just a personal quest but also a reflection of the broader

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Victor Meadowcroft, *Qorpus*, 11.1 (March 2021), Especial Brazilian Translation Club, pp. 74 <https://qorpuspget.paginas.ufsc.br/files/2021/03/The-aboni-spirit-of-things_Itamar-Vieira-Junior-translated-by-Victor-Meadowcroft.pdf> [accessed 7 March 2025].

[36] See Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva, 'The Aims and the Stories of the Brazilian Translation Club,' *Qorpus*, 11.1 (2021), pp. 08–14 <The-aims-and-stories-of-the-BTC_Ana-Claudia-Suriani.pdf> [accessed 04 September 2024].

[37] According to Alan Vogel, *fowa* means 'manioc, cassava; bitter manioc,' in Alan Vogel, *Jarawara–English Dictionary* (Dallas: SIL International, 2016) <https://www.sil.org/system/files/reapdata/16/80/60/168060388282118760175898345848681197393/Jarawara_English_Dictionary.pdf> [accessed 7 March 2025], p. 91.

struggles of indigenous communities against cultural and environmental exploitation. His growth as a character reflects not only personal transformation but also a reaffirmation of his commitment to his community and the environment. The narrative emphasises the importance of protecting both cultural heritage and the natural world, presenting them as interdependent, a system in which all characters, both male and female, play a role. For example, Tokowisa's wife, Yanici, is described as no longer tending to the plots of cassava and maize, a detail that underscores the disruption of traditional ways of life by external threats. Tokowisa's journey tests his physical and spiritual limits through challenges like navigating dangerous rivers and confronting spiritual entities. These arduous experiences serve as a metaphor for the broader struggles indigenous communities face in maintaining their cultural identity and connection to the land.

4.b) *El astronauta paraguayo* by Douglas Diegues

El astronauta paraguayo is a groundbreaking work that embodies the spirit of *portunhol selvagem*, a linguistic and literary movement that transcends conventional boundaries of language, culture and identity. As a cartonera book, it reflects the movement's commitment to accessibility, creativity, and cultural resistance, using handmade, recycled materials to democratise literature, to prioritise community, inclusivity, and sustainability over profit and commercialisation, making them an alternative to the traditional publishing industry. *El astronauta paraguayo* features a unique hero, who is both urban and indigenous, embodying the fluid and hybrid identity of South America. This character embarks on a surreal, magical journey, floating ever higher 'depois de beber alguma poção mágica' ['after drinking some magical potion'], a narrative device that serves as a metaphor for the dissolution of rigid national and cultural borders. According to Sérgio Medeiros,

> o herói [in *El astronauta paraguayo*] está acima das nacionalidades e flutua livremente sobre o mapa lingüístico da América do Sul, expressando-se numa língua híbrida, que desconsidera divisões políticas e culturais, embaralhando fronteiras ou tornando-as incrivelmente porosas. Não existe mais uma fronteira linear, homogênea, mas muitas fronteiras quebradas, confusas, ineficazes.[38]

[The hero transcends nationalities and floats freely over the linguistic map of South America, expressing themselves in a hybrid language that disregards political and cultural

[38] Sérgio Medeiros, 'Cosmonauta de coração partido,' in Douglas Diegues, *El Astronauta Paraguayo*, in *Yiyi Jambo* (2007), p. 2.

divisions, blurring borders or rendering them incredibly porous. No longer does a linear, homogeneous frontier exist; instead, there are many fractured, muddled, ineffective boundaries.]

Written 'num saboroso macarrônico que mescla o espanhol com o guarani e o português, línguas faladas na "Triplefrontera"' ['in a flavoursome macaronic blend of Spanish, Guaraní, and Portuguese, languages spoken in the "Triple Frontier"'], the poem reflects the rich linguistic diversity of the region, where Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina converge.[39] This hybrid language, is not merely a linguistic experiment but a profound artistic expression that challenges the dominance of colonial languages and celebrates the polyphony of South American cultures.

The poem's language 'brota como flor de la bosta de las vakas' ('springs like a flower from the muck of cows'),[40] a vivid metaphor that captures its raw, organic, and rebellious nature. *Portunhol selvagem* rejects conventional grammar and rules, blending Portuguese, Spanish, Guarani and other languages spoken in the border region of Ponta Porã (Brazil) and Pedro Juan Caballero (Paraguay), including Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, German, French, and American English.[41] This linguistic fluidity creates a decentralised, creative language that encourages polyphony, playfulness and the exploration of ambiguity, dissonance and multiple meanings.

The poem's linguistic experimentation is deeply intertwined with its cultural and thematic concerns. The astronaut's journey through space is symbolic of the dissolution of rigid national boundaries, as his macaronic speech allows him to float freely above the linguistic map of South America, creating a sense of interconnectedness between cultures. This journey is both a spiritual ascent and a descent into personal and social challenges. The astronaut's lucid and delirious exploration of these themes culminates in his return to the culturally complex 'Triplefrontera,' symbolising a re-grounding in reality. This duality (elevation and descent, euphoria and suffering) is central to the poem's structure and meaning, as it contrasts the astronaut's cosmic journey with the grounded realities of the borderlands.

The poem's cultural references and humour further enrich its exploration of identity and hybridity, creating a dynamic interplay between the mundane and the fantastical, the local and the global. On one hand, it pays homage to literary figures like Paraguayan writer Roa Bastos

[39] Medeiros, p. 1.
[40] Douglas Diegues, *Zunái – Revista de poesia & debates* <http://revistazunai.com/poemas/douglas_diegues.htm> [accessed 10 October 2024].
[41] See Anselmo Peres Aló, 'Portuñol Selvagem: Da "língua de contato" à poética da fronteira,' *Cadernos de Letras da UFF – Dossiê: América Central e Caribe: múltiplos olhares*, 45 (2013), 283–304.

and Brazilian poet Manoel de Barros, whose works similarly explore the intersections of language, identity, and culture. Through intertextuality, Diegues situates *El astronauta paraguayo* within a broader tradition of Latin American literature that challenges colonial legacies and celebrates cultural hybridity. On the other, it juxtaposes the mundane with the fantastical and the local with the global and embodies the *espírito macunaímico* – a concept rooted in Mário de Andrade's *Macunaíma* (1928), which embraces fluidity, contradiction, and the blending of cultural influences – to celebrate the creativity and resilience of borderland communities, who navigate and reinterpret multiple cultural influences in their daily lives.

4.c) Leo Castilho's 'O meu nome'

Leo Castilho's poem 'O meu nome' is a powerful piece of slam poetry that confronts societal norms and critiques the labels imposed on the deaf and hearing-impaired community. Presented during the Covid pandemic through a pre-recorded video at Slam Cúir 2020, part of the Literary Festival of the Peripheries (Flup), the poem exemplifies how slam poetry serves as a platform for political expression and cultural resistance.[42] Delivered in a multilingual format – combining Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) with corporal performance – and accompanied by subtitles in Portuguese and English, the performance amplified the voices of the deaf and hearing-impaired community while challenging dominant language hierarchies (Fig. 3). This approach transcended mere accessibility, asserting the importance of representation and the right to be seen and heard across multiple linguistic and cultural spaces.

'O meu nome'

Nasceu o Leonardo.
Mas ele é surdo, e agora?
Não entendia
as limitações que me davam.
Então me chamavam 'surdo.'
Meu nome era 'surdo'?
Muitas bocas mexendo e não entendia.
Ao usar aparelho para escutar
me diziam 'ele fala bem'
mas é surdo? 'Que bagunça!'
A sociedade dificulta
e eu não entendia

[42] Leo Castilho, 'O meu nome,' Slam Cúir 2020 <https://youtu.be/C0XGqrUvi3A?feature=shared> [accessed on: 19 March 2025].

por que eles se chamam ‘não-deficientes’?
Mas, o que são? São os NORMAIS?
Ué? Mas ele é surdo?
Surdo não é normal?
As limitações na sociedade.
Sem acesso, só, em casa.
Surdo, surdo, surdo.
Quem me deu esse nome?
Ah, os ouvintes.
Era apenas ‘surdo,’ sem comunicação!
É?
Sem vida. É?
Vive no silêncio. É?
Não estou entendendo.
Eu tenho minha língua materna.
Minhas expressões.
Posso transar! Somos iguais.
Afinal, sou normal também.
Sou apenas uma pessoa que se chama Leo.

[‘My Name’

Leonardo was born.
But he’s deaf, so what now?
I didn’t understand
the limits they gave me.
So they called me ’deaf’.
Was my name ’deaf’?
Mouths moving, endless, I understood nothing.
When I wore hearing aids,
they’d say, ’He speaks so well!’
But he’s deaf? ’What a mess!’
Society trips me up,
and I couldn’t grasp:
why do they call themselves ’non-disabled’?
What are they, then? The NORMAL ones?
Wait, but he’s deaf?
Isn’t deaf normal too?
The limitations of society.
No access, he has to stay home.
Deaf, deaf, deaf.
Who gave me that name?
Ah, the hearing people.
Just ‘deaf,’ no communication!
Really?
No life? Really?
They live in silence? Really?
I don’t follow.
I have my mother tongue.

My expressions.
I can have sex! We're the same.
It turns out, I'm normal too.
I'm just a person named Leo.]

Figure 3: Stills from Leo Castilho's performance of 'O meu nome' at Slam Cúir 2020.

Slam poetry, as an art form, emerged in the 1980s as a way to democratise poetry, making it more accessible and engaging, particularly for younger audiences. It is inherently performative, blending the oral tradition of poetry with theatrical elements to create a multisensory experience. Unlike traditional poetry, which is often confined to the page, slam poetry is dynamic and deeply interactive. The poet, the poem and the audience exist in a constant dialogue, with the audience often playing a role in judging or responding to the performance. This interactivity is central to the slam poetry experience, as it transforms the act of reading or listening into a shared, communal event.

Poetry slams are competitive events where poets perform their original work within a set time limit, typically three minutes. The rules are designed to ensure fairness and maintain the integrity of the competition while allowing poets to showcase their creativity and talent. Props and costumes are prohibited, placing the focus squarely on the poet's words and performance. Judges, often selected from the audience, evaluate the performances based on criteria such as vocal delivery, physical presence, and emotional impact. This format creates a supportive yet competitive environment that encourages poets to push the boundaries of their craft. [43]

Leo Castilho's 'O meu nome' exemplifies the political potential of slam poetry. The poem critiques societal norms and the hearing world's marginalisation of the deaf community. By questioning the label 'deaf' and challenging the notion of 'normal,' Leo exposes the ableist assumptions that underpin much of society's treatment of hearing-impaired individuals. The poem's refrain, 'Surdo, surdo, surdo' ('Deaf, deaf, deaf'), echoes the relentless categorisation and othering that deaf people face, while 'Quem me deu esse nome?' ['Who gave me that name?'] underscores the power dynamics at play in naming and defining identities. The poem's conclusion, 'Sou apenas uma pessoa que se chama Leo' ['I'm just a person named Leo'], is a

[43] See Susan B. A. Somers-Willett, 'On Page and Stage: Slam Poetry as a Genre,' *The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry: Race, Identity, and the Performance of Popular Verse in America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), pp. 16–38 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.322627.5> [accessed on: 19 March 2025].

powerful assertion of individuality and humanity, rejecting the reductive labels imposed by society.

5. Minor literature?

Deleuze and Guatari's concept of 'minor literature,' as articulated through the three characteristics of deterritorialisation of language, the political element, and collective value, provides an initial framework for understanding how marginalised groups navigate and transform dominant linguistic systems. Kafka's work, as analysed by Deleuze and Guattari, exemplifies this impasse, where a minority writer uses a major language in ways that both belong to and alienate them from it. This creates unique literary spaces where the writer/artist mediates between their minority identity and the dominant culture. In that sense, 'O espírito *aboni* das coisas' exemplifies how literature can serve as a space of resistance and cultural reaffirmation, because it deterriorialises the dominant Portuguese language by infusing it with Jarawara elements. Like in Mario de Andrade's *Macunaíma* and José de Alencar's *Iracema*, Portuguese is deterritorialised through its fusion with indigenous languages and indigenous and Afro-Brazilian cosmologies. These texts create a hybrid literary space that reflects Brazil's complex cultural identity, challenging the dominance of Portuguese while simultaneously enriching it.

The performance of 'O meu nome' at Slam Cúir 2020 also highlights the role of slam poetry as a form of 'minor literature.' Castilho's gesture-based poetry, performed in LIBRAS, creates a hybrid form of expression that deterritorialises the auditory-centric norms of traditional poetry. By privileging sign language and physical performance over the spoken word, it embodies the revolutionary potential of 'minor literature.' It offers a new mode of poetic expression that reappropriates public space and challenges the historical exclusion of the hearing impaired from audio performances. It therefore not only makes poetry accessible to the hearing-impaired community but also redefines what poetry can be and do, by expanding its sensory and linguistic boundaries.

However, the concept of 'minor literature' is not without its challenges and limitations, as demonstrated by the literary phenomenon of *portunhol selvagem.* Unlike Kafka's use of German, which operates within the framework of a major language, *portunhol selvagem* rejects linguistic borders and hierarchies altogether. It thrives in the borderlands of Brazil and Paraguay (and Argentina, Uruguay etc), blending autochthonous and allochthonous languages into a fluid, anarchic form of expression. This radical deterritorialisation goes beyond the

European deleuzian framework, as it exists in a perpetual state of linguistic flux and disobedience. The language of *El autronauta paraguayo* thus challenges the very notion of a fixed linguistic territory, offering a form of expression that is inherently anti-systemic and resistant to codification.

In fact, *El astronauta paraguayo*, embodies a form of literary innovation that resonates with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s concept of signifyin(g). The text's blending of languages creates a dynamic linguistic interplay, where meaning becomes fluid and multifaceted, echoing the subversive doubling central to Gates' framework. Just as Gates illustrates how African American vernacular disrupts the rigid equation of 'sign = signified/signifier,' *El astronauta paraguayo* destabilises conventional linguistic norms, transforming the borderlands between Brazil and Paraguay into a site of linguistic resistance and creativity.[44] The Paraguayan astronaut, reminiscent of the trickster figure in Gates' signifyin(g) tradition and embodying the *espírito macunaímico*, thrives on ambiguity and multiplicity. This figure resists fixed categorization within any singular national language or cultural framework, embracing instead a fluid and dynamic identity. In this way, it functions as a kind of literary astronaut, navigating the liminal space between languages, where the playful reconfiguration of words becomes both a political act and a celebration of hybridity. The text, in its irreverent manipulation of language, seems to challenge the reader, asserting that linguistic boundaries are not fixed but malleable. Through this inventive approach, *El astronauta paraguayo* not only critiques linguistic hierarchies but also invites a reimagining of meaning-making itself, demonstrating that innovation and resistance can emerge from the playful deconstruction of dominant systems.

Similarly 'O espírito *aboni* das coisas' exemplifies a form of literary signifyin(g) as theorised by Gate through its innovative blending of Jarawara and Portuguese. By italicising Jarawara terms and seamlessly integrating Tupi-derived words such as *igarapé* and *mandioca,* Itamar Vieira Júnior creates a narrative with multiple linguistic layers. This linguistic hybridity mirrors Gates' concept of double-voiced discourse, where marginalised languages and cultures assert their presence within a dominant framework precisely because they are part of the fabric of the Brazilian Portuguese language and the lived experience of the peoples it represents.

6. Conclusion

[44] Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

The exploration of Brazilian literature through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'minor literature' reveals both its transformative potential and its inherent contradictions when applied to Latin American contexts. While the concept provides a valuable framework for understanding how marginalised writers subvert dominant languages, it also raises critical questions about the very notion of the 'minor.' If the majority of Latin Americans communicate in ways that diverge significantly from the 'paper language' of the colonisers, then the label 'minor' becomes problematic. Furthermore, in the context of teaching Portuguese in UK universities (where it is often institutionally marginalised and considered a 'minor' language due to lower student numbers compared to Spanish, French, and German) the tension between 'minor' and 'major' languages takes on another dimension. This is particularly striking given that Portuguese is the eighth most spoken languages in the world.[45]

The texts examined in this study demonstrate that linguistic resistance operates not just against dominant languages but also through them and alongside other allochthonous, autochthonous, and sign languages. Their inclusion in Latin American studies modules aimed at students of Spanish and Portuguese underscores a profound irony: these 'minor' literatures are often taught through comparison to the colonial languages they seek to destabilise, through their normative grammars, and through European and North American theories (including those of Deleuze and Guattari). This pedagogical reality invites reflection on how decolonising the curriculum must go beyond mere representation and engage with the structural hierarchies that shape which languages, and whose voices, are deemed worthy of academic study as producers of knowledge. European theories can be a productive starting point, but they cannot be seen as a universal framework. Instead, they must be understood, according to Walter D. Mignolo, as localised, geo-historical products of the modern/colonial project. Therefore, it is important to confront these theories, to teach them not as natural truths but as situated knowledge, explicitly outlining their epistemic limitations in grasping realities shaped by colonialism. The goal is to move away from the assumption that European thinkers and Europeans languages hold the only keys to valid interpretation. Pedagogically, this means shifting the role of the Latin American texts from being 'objects of study' to being 'sites of knowledge' in their own right. The authors are 'producers of knowledge,' whose work often performs a 'body-politics' and 'geo-politics of knowledge' that can and should generate its

[45] The most spoken languages worldwide in 2025 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/> [accessed on: 19 March 2025].

own analytical frameworks.[46] This involves a conscious practice of 'shifting the geography of reason,' where the concepts, metaphors, and structures within the literary work itself become the primary tools for its critique, challenging students to listen for the epistemologies emerging from the literary texts rather than simply applying external systems to it.

[46] Walter D. Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom,' *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 7-8 (December 2009): 159–181 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276409349275> [accessed 20 August 2025].