

# Social identity and language ideology: challenging hegemonic visions of English in Brazil

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## Resumo

*This paper seeks to investigate the social identities connected to English in Brazil by connecting these to linguistic ideologies, and reflecting on how they may be challenged. It is based on first-person narration of "critical moments" from the perspective of an English language "native speaker" migrant to Brazil. The reflections identify how race is intimately connected to the "native speaker" category, theorised through the notions of "racial acceptability" and "racial capital", drawing on a Bourdieusian theoretical framework. The article concludes with examples of challenges to the "native speaker" model in the hybrid linguistic practices of Brazilian youth.*

**Keywords:** *Language ideology. Migration. Racial identity. English as an additional language. auto-ethnography.*

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## Introduction

*“You have been called up to the recycling selection” announce dozens of colourful posters showing floating tin cans and earnest individuals in yellow shirts, along with the baffling “#WeAreAllWastePickers”. I am lining up under the hot sun to see a World Cup game on the big screen set up in a convention centre in the city of Belo Horizonte. It is an unusual experience for me to see my native language in suburban Brazil, and surrounded by what seems to be an entirely Latin American crowd, it feels like a touch designed to convey a sense of cosmopolitanism to locals rather than communicate any message to me – an English speaker – about picking up rubbish. For one thing, the term “selection” doesn’t make sense to me, and for another, I have no idea what a “waste picker” is. Only when Spanish and Portuguese versions of the poster come into view does the meaning begin to emerge.*

What can first-person accounts, such as the one above, contribute to our understandings of the social and political dynamics of linguistic pluralism? I believe that they can, amongst other things, provide a valuable strategy for confronting language ideology, and in the specific case considered in this paper, ideologies surrounding the learning and use of English in Brazil. This belief is founded on some productive pedagogical moments that have arisen from the use of such accounts. Part of the success of using such accounts, ironically, comes from the status and credibility accorded to “native speakers” of English in Brazilian classrooms. That a usage, or indeed concept such as “waste picker”<sup>1</sup> should be incomprehensible to a “native speaker” is a shock to many Brazilian students, for whom the figure of the *catador de lixo* is part of their daily reality. This realisation opens up space for a discussion about the relationship between language and social structures that can expand from a small personal incident to reflections on the linguistic landscapes of India and South Africa, where large numbers of waste pickers use English as a language of communication and campaigning – but are not viewed as “native speakers”. It also allows for reflection on the intention of Brazilian sporting authorities in seeking to appropriate and resignify the stigmatised figure of the *catador de lixo*, and attempts to recruit other signifying practices, such as the “we are all x” expression of solidarity, and the hash-tag.

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<sup>1</sup>“catador de lixo” in the Portuguese version.

### Evocative narratives and critical moments

The present contribution adopts a novel perspective – that of an English-speaking migrant to Brazil – and a somewhat unusual approach – first-person narrative of critical moments (PENNYCOOK, 2004). A number of scholars in applied linguistics have adopted a tone of personal reflection in their writing. Alastair Pennycook (2004) has described his internal ponderings on a train journey as a technique for reflection on the “critical” in pedagogical knowledge. Similarly, Claire Kramsch (2008) has used autobiography as a strategy for reflecting on language and social power as they influence the life-course and intellectual journey of a migrant. However, such personal accounts are far more common in lectures and presentations than in published work, perhaps reflective of the suspect status of this kind of knowledge.

While I am not aware of any personal accounts in their writing, my own reflections have been inspired, in part, by the narratives presented in public lectures by two important figures in Brazilian applied linguistics. Lynn Mario Menezes de Souza, originally from Goa and a British subject classified as a “native speaker”, has discussed his own racial reclassification in official documents upon moving to Brazil. Kanavillil Rajagopalan, one of the most vehement critics of the native-speaker model, has described growing up speaking multiple languages in India, questioning the classification of languages as distinct entities. Both of these scholars have contributed rich reflections on linguistic hybridity and the post-colonial conditions of language circulation from migrant perspectives.

This paper also draws on traditions of self-reflection on social power more generally, as represented in the foundational work of McIntosh (1998) on racial and gender privilege. McIntosh’s reflections are based on the premise that social hierarchies are protected by powerful systems of denial and taboo, describing her own privilege as a white person as “an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious” (MCINTOSH, 1998, p. 265). In her vision, denial of inequalities is necessary to maintain the myth of a meritocratic society, which in turn helps to maintain power in the hands of a few by providing the illusion that all may participate equally

in the life and decisions of society. The identification of critical moments can help to expose such myths.

Some versions of this personal approach to scholarly writing have been formalised as a methodology under the concept of autoethnography. Autoethnography is a qualitative research methodology that seeks to relate personal narratives and vignettes to wider cultural norms and practices, capturing intimate situations and experiences not available through other methods (DENZIN, 1997; ELLIS, 2004). The approach joins together elements of autobiography and ethnography, together with a vision of research as a political act at the service of social justice (ELLIS; ADAMS; BOCHNER, 2011). “Evocative narratives” reconstruct, in the first person, rich descriptions of particular events that prompt a series of reflections about particular issues, such as race relations (ELLIS et al., 2000, p. 744). The tone may be more literary and descriptive than other forms of research, blurring lines between genres (ELLIS et al., 2000; BLANCO, 2012), and potentially endangering its status as scholarship.

Autoethnography has been criticised as self-indulgent and narcissistic, as well as lacking critical distance from its subject matter (MÉNDEZ, 2013). While I agree that there are limitations to the approach, particularly when used in isolation, I believe that it opens up some rich possibilities for reflection and allows for an important part of scholarly practice to become visible beyond the classroom or lecture theatre. Further, my interest is how personal narratives may be used as part of teacher education, and how reflection on “jarring” moments of linguistic and cultural contact involving an English “native speaker” in Brazil can shed light on the identities, values and social relations associated with the language. I seek to show how such moments can be used to challenge both linguistic ideologies, and wider cultural systems underpinning social and educational inequalities.

### **First steps**

*At the passport control on my first trip to Brazil I am waved through to a Federal Police booth where a bored officer in a crisp blue uniform fails to hide her boredom. I venture a smile as she rifles through my passport, before asking the purpose of my visit. “I’m*

here to study English teaching" I reply, searching for my letter of invitation. Her expression changes and suddenly she is more interested in my case. "I'm an English teacher too", she explains, stamping and returning my passport. For a moment, I fail to understand what she is saying – how could a Federal Police officer in charge of border control also be an English teacher? And so, I take my first steps into a universe where I would meet many language teachers who, in addition to moonlighting as police officers, make ends meet taking on temporary work in shopping centres at Christmas time, or selling hats on the street over Carnival. I would learn that language teaching was also a temporary or fill-in job for many, particularly in the commercial language courses that dominate the profession. With low salaries in public schools, and no requirement for teaching qualifications in commercial courses, I would meet teachers with three, or even four jobs in different sectors.

What failed to catch my attention in the airport was that the attendant who waved me through to the Federal Police booth was the only Black person in an arrivals hall filled with Brazilians returning home from travels to the US, or paying temporary visits to family and friends. Staying in the up-market Paulista avenue and participating at events in universities, it appeared initially that Black Brazilians were a small and oppressed minority, visible only in service roles. The spatial segregation of Brazil is such that it is possible to maintain this illusion in many urban spaces, and leave without being any the wiser. Only when I began visiting public schools did I understand that Brazil has a majority Black population, and in some geographical and institutional locations, is almost exclusively Black.

I experience a distinctive racial dynamic as a white foreigner visiting Brazilian public schools. I am ushered by a pedagogical coordinator straight to see the principal, then taken on a tour of the classrooms which instantly cease their activities to attend to my presence. This contrasts with the difficulties and downright suspicion I have encountered visiting schools in Australia and France. Even when I have visited school secretariats merely to accompany a Black Brazilian friend, I am always attended to first, with sometimes embarrassingly keen interest and even deference – particularly by staff or teachers with relatives who have travelled on language exchanges. The students, however, only want to know the answer to one question that is rather confusing for the new arrival – what is your team? Some of the most interesting work I have done subsequently in Brazilian schools has involved comparing footballing cultures.

A further initial experience that distinguishes Brazil is concern to pronounce my name correctly and in “English” fashion, despite it being a common name with existing Brazilian Portuguese pronunciation. This is in sharp contrast with my experiences in France, where the use of French pronunciation for my name went without question or even curiosity about alternative pronunciations. I sense that this is connected both to a certain deference to English-language cultures in particular, but also to my status as a white outsider – “whiter” even compared to those Brazilians considered to be white. In France, I easily pass as a “native”, but in Brazil I often hear “I could tell from your face that you’re not from here” or “you’re not Brazilian, are you?” even before I open my mouth. This pre-judgement is not merely of nationality and linguistic difference, but social competence (legitimacy) more broadly. At a driving school I am told that I “have the face of someone who already has a license”. When I introduce myself as a teacher at a party thrown by an academic colleague, as a teacher, this is taken at face value. But my interlocutor sounds almost relieved when my companion, who is Black, reveals that he is not, replying “I was wondering what kind of teacher you could be with a face like that”. In the academic world, where 99% of professors at the major public universities are white (SILVEIRA, 2016), as well other white middle-class social circles, it is common for Black romantic partners simply not to be introduced, or be introduced with reference made to “mitigating qualities” (holding a Masters Degree or a high status occupation) (MELO; BORGES; PELÚCIO, 2016).

I am a particular kind of outsider – a gringo – a term that is usually applied to white foreigners from wealthy nations, who are also more likely to be viewed, and to view themselves as “expats” rather than migrants<sup>2</sup>. Discussion of immigrants in Brazil revolves around Bolivians, Peruvians and Haitians – groups that are unlikely to be described as gringos and which fit into subaltern positions in pre-existing racial hierarchies. I am also more likely to be viewed as a legitimate “native speaker”, or even second language speaker, of European languages than Black Haitian migrants fluent in French or English. It is indeed difficult for me to see myself within the category “migrant” in Brazil, perhaps because there is an expectation that my stay in Brazil is always temporary and tied to specialist activities, or perhaps because any definition of English-speaking communities in Brazil is framed by the figure of the “ex-patriate”. This is, of course, within a restricted definition of English-speaking communities.

<sup>2</sup> In an interview recorded for another study (WINDLE, 2014), a participant observed, “It seems Gringo is linked to colour. At a glance you can see they’re not (Brazilian). Gringo is connected to the look. The idea of White, blond, from a rich country.” (“Gringo parece que tá ligado ao cor, bate o olho é já vê que não é (brasileiro). Gringo está ligado ao visual. A ideia que tem de branco, loiro, de país rico.”)

*A Brazilian colleague who has just described her three month visit to India informs me that she has never been to an English-speaking country.*

### **The ideology of the native speaker**

The narrative above illustrates how the dominant social identity tied to English both internationally and in Brazil is undoubtedly that of the “native speaker”, who is a “native” of what Kachru has called the “inner circle” of English-speaking nations - those which have established supremacy as the norm for other settings (KACHRU, 1992b; RAJAGOPALAN, 2007; HOLLIDAY, 2009). This identity has a racial dimension - being, almost by definition, white, middle-class and a speaker of one of two hegemonic “versions” of English - American or British (KIRKPATRICK, 2007). “Black” varieties are held to be sub-varieties of implicitly white norms. Linguistic legitimacy and status is, therefore, dependent on the social power of speakers (BOURDIEU; THOMPSON, 1991).

Apart from the American-British distinction, English appears as a single, pure and foreign linguistic entity that is the vehicle of one, or at best two, sets of cultural practices and experiences - capturing elements of myth and reality (DAVIES, 2003). The native speaker is central to construction of monolithic concepts of language and nation (MAKONI; PENNYCOOK, 2007), with colonial preoccupations with racial purity feeding into the project of linguistic purity (RAJAGOPALAN, 2007, p. 194). This fetishisation of the native speaker fits within the wider cultural dynamic of post-colonial knowledge production, in which the global north (or west) remains the universal reference point and peripheral locations are sites for the application or testing of such knowledge (DE SOUZA, 2006; CONNELL, 2007).

This is one reason that an English speaker in Brazil appears to be outside of the dynamic of migration. English has been viewed as exogenous in Brazil, lacking the communities of speakers that “migrant” or indigenous languages enjoy. As a consequence, Brazil appears to have no internal productive capacities in English, it simply receives and masters external linguistic models and practices.

There is an established literature in Brazil on the problems that the native-speaker model presents to Brazilian teachers, who face an “impostor complex” as “non-native speakers” (JORDÃO, 2011; JORDÃO; MARTINEZ; HALU, 2014). This also produces a hyper-valorisation of certain English-speaking countries, and a devaluing of Brazil that is tied to ideas of racial mixing and cultural inferiority (MOITA LOPES, 1996). A focus on “native-like” accuracy and fluency, particularly in oral production, in commercial language courses, is another contributor to the problem (ALMEIDA, 2014). The idea that English cannot be taught in public schools, only in the more socially restricted settings of private language courses (LIMA, 2011), contributes to the socially and racially exclusive image of the language. In addition to being associated with wealthy nations and populations outside of Brazil, internally English is closely tied to the educational and cultural practices of elite groups (WINDLE; NOGUEIRA, 2015).

One concrete example is the oral evaluation standard used by one high-prestige Brazilian language - how a hypothetical native speaker would view the student’s performance (DE MATTOS ZAIDAN, 2013, p. 81). Zaidan notes that the focus on “native speaker teachers” or sustained contact by teachers with native speakers in Kachru’s inner-circle settings (taken as a guarantee of “authenticity”), is valued above teaching qualifications (DE MATTOS ZAIDAN, 2013, p. 81-82). This constitutes a form of symbolic violence that undermines the authority and legitimacy of those who cannot lay claim to native (or native-like) qualities in their pronunciation, speech patterns, and cultural experiences (DE MATTOS ZAIDAN, 2013). The long years that most Brazilian English teachers spend in private language courses gives particular power to the linguistic ideologies propagated therein (ALMEIDA, 2014).

This commercial market, as an employer and educational provider, is huge (SOUZA, 2013), with language schools being the second largest franchise sector after fast food. The sector is controlled by multinational companies, including Pearson and its recent Brazilian acquisition, the Multi group, and these have an interest in propagating the “native speaker” ideology as they are able to give the appearance of being uniquely placed to provide the conditions for “native” contact and learning.

## Linguistic competence and authenticity

*“Life is not an English language school where the nigga speaks slowly for you to understand. Life is a guy from regional Texas.”<sup>3</sup>*

*Was I the only person who found this life-lesson, circulated on Twitter and Facebook, offensive? It seemed to invalidate almost all of my daily interactions in English in Brazil, including with my students at a provincial university and with my partner. Speaking English in a way that Brazilians, particularly students, can understand is simply not “life”. Life only occurs outside of Brazil, with a mythical Texan that most Brazilians will never meet, and who is obviously a monolingual, white, cowboy. There is an assumption that the reader would want to communicate with this “guy” in the first place, itself a questionable proposition. And that the reader would not want to communicate with a local “boy” or “nigga” (“nego”), a lowly and inauthentic figure in this definition of life.*

*When I showed this aphorism in undergraduate classes, seeking to make it into a critical moment for reflection on language ideology, I found that my interpretation did not resonate at all. Students insisted that “nego” had no racial dimension, nor did “guy from regional Texas”. These middle-class university students, most with many years of commercial language school classes behind them, told me that the message was simply that it is hard to understand native speakers compared to English in classroom situations. Nothing more.*

*When my students set up a video exchange with some school students from Texas, however, they were astounded to find that the Texan children were all Spanish speakers, the children of migrants from Mexico. The children from Texas themselves helped to deconstruct the racial and linguistic identities tied to their state, with one observing “you probably think we’re cowboys here. Well, we’re not. We live in the city, we are Latino, we speak Spanish at home”. It seems that while the image of the native speaker can be shaken up, the overall idea that the best, and perhaps only authentic use for English is with native speakers outside of Brazil remains intact. Perhaps it is my own belief that the many and creative uses of English by Brazilians inside of Brazil are far more interesting for making “life” than listening in on Texan cowboys, that makes me react so strongly to the aphorism.*

*Part of the failure of the experience outlined above to gain traction as a challenge to linguistic and racial ideologies is the de-racialisation of the term “nego”. The slippage from “nego”*

<sup>3</sup> “A vida não é um cursinho de inglês onde nego fala devagar pra você entender. A vida é um cara do interior do Texas.”

to “*negro*” (which unambiguously refers to Black subjects) in a rant by actor Claudio Botelho is indicative of how the term sets itself up as one both of familiarity and inferiority. “An actor cannot be ordered about by a Black” yelled Botelho, after being booed by an audience and forced to abandon a performance in the city of Belo Horizonte (TERENZI; FIORATTI, 2016). He later claimed he did not mean to say “*negro*” (Black) but “*nego*”, which has a wider range of possible meanings, according to the actor simply meaning “person”.

However, it is not by chance that “*cara*” (guy) is used for the American subject in the aphorism above while “*nego*” is used for the Brazilian subject. “*Nego*” (literally, “nigga”) may be used as a term of endearment amongst intimates (darling, buddy), but it may also be a reference to race, or sometimes both at once. When used as an out-group reference, it easily becomes a racist insult, historically used by white colonists to diminish and humiliate slaves, putting them on the level of animals (RAMOS, 2015; CARVALHO, 2016).

In the context of online memes, virtually all *nego* memes represent Black people, and the jokes are often based on their presence or involvement in situations seen as incongruous for Black people, or playing on literal or absurd re-significations of common expressions (CARVALHO, 2016). The humour is based on the qualities associated with the term in the diminutive form (“*neguinho*”): “In the ordinary language of São Paulo, the expression ‘*neguinho*’ is often used to characterize any individual who wishes to go beyond the limit, transgress norms, deceive their neighbour, a cheeky/insubordinate person”<sup>4</sup> (CUTI, 2007, p. 33).

This mix of intimacy and put-down can be captured in the translation of the term as “boy”, historically used to lower African American men. Using this translation, an image a Black man looking over the ocean can be captioned “this boy has gone far”, and of Morgan Freeman in *Bruce Almighty* “this boy thinks he is God”, while “this boy judges others” would accompany a photo of Black judge Joaquim Barbosa<sup>5</sup> and an image of a Black businessman on a plane would read “the boy travels”.

This line of humour is aligned with the humiliation and ridicule of “failed” attempts at English by poor Brazilians, as well as their “vulgar” and “crude” attempts to imitate English-sounding names, well-established as part of the stock-

<sup>4</sup> “Na linguagem corriqueira paulistana, emprega-se bastante a expressão ‘*neguinho*’ para caracterizar qualquer indivíduo que pretenda ultrapassar os limites, transgredir as normas, enganar o próximo, uma pessoa abusada.”

<sup>5</sup> Nego foi longe. Nego pensa que é Deus (Morgan Freeman plays God in this film). Nego julga os outros. Nego viaja.

and-trade of Brazilian television comedy (author, 2016). These shaming practices serve to reinforce and naturalise the social order, strengthening the exclusion of oppressed groups by virtue of their linguistic incompetence.

### **Linguistics markets and linguistic capital**

The use of the term “*nego*” to diminish and disqualify a particular speaking position is revealing of one of the more hidden elements of the linguistic market – suggesting that competence is intimately linked to a particular kind of authenticity that is inevitably beyond the reach of some speakers. Such a claim rejects concept of communicative competence (HYMES, 1972), in which the implicit norm is that of the native speaker, or even that of intercultural communicative competence (ALPTEKIN, 2002), which dislocates this norm to plurilingual encounters, but without acknowledging power inequalities, such as those tied to race in Brazil.

Bourdieu proposes replacing the notion of linguistic competence with that of acceptability (BOURDIEU; THOMPSON, 1991; MORATO; BENTES, 2002). Acceptability involves three dimensions: use of consecrated forms; a setting appropriate for the discursive forms employed by the speaker; and a social position that grants the speaker authority to speak. The racial dimension of who has the right to speak (and be listened to) has been highlighted by writers reflecting upon world Englishes and migrant groups, particularly ethnic minority women (NORTON, 2000; GRANT; WONG, 2008). Authority to speak is always fragile and subject to disqualification for “non-native” English teachers in Brazil, for example. Even ‘native-speakers’ who do not meet norms of *racial acceptability* may be disqualified. The Haitian French teacher struggles to find students, the Black Brazilian English teacher must constantly demonstrate that they are, in fact, a capable professional.

Bourdieu argues that this authority is granted by the possession of the particular kinds of capital that hold value in distinctive linguistic and social markets (or fields). Capital may take on deeply embodied forms – particularly in the form of cultural tastes, dispositions and forms of self-expression

- and its efficacy is greatest when it is invisible - that is, misrecognised as something other than a form of social power. Racial capital has been used to extend Bourdieu's framework as an additional dimension of social hierarchies:

Racial capital is a resource drawn from the body that can be related to skin tone, facial features, body shape, etc... Both Anglo bodies and light or white skin confer status on people of color in an individualistic way. Light skin tone can be transformed into social capital (social networks), symbolic capital (esteem or status), or even economic capital (high-paying job or promotion). (HUNTER, 2011, p. 145)

The notion of racial acceptability introduced above speaks to the idea of hidden kinds of racial capital within a racialized linguistic market - linked to the structures of the education system and the role this plays in social class relations (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1979, 1990; BOURDIEU; THOMPSON, 1991; BOURDIEU; PASSERON; SAINT MARTIN, 1994). Racial acceptability and racial capital are hidden because language appears to be a quality that is both universal and collective, available to any and all through effort or length of contact. At the same time, linguistic identities are deeply individualised constructs (BOURDIEU; THOMPSON, 1991, p. 50-51).

The rules are always stricter and the burden of proof higher for those at the margins - those with least cultural and linguistic (or embodied racial) capital. Some must prove themselves through gruelling rites of passage, sometimes over and over again, while others are instantly granted approval. Optimistic educational theories that focus on promoting cultural pluralism through the appropriation of powerful discourses and their refashioning (COPE; KALANTZIS, 2000) downplay the ways in which competence is defined by the speaker and situation, not merely their words. Such theories present a vision of hyper-fluidity, backed by historical revision that places discursive moves (the adoption of legal discourses by Black rights movements, for example) above the organisational and political dynamics of struggles against oppression. The notion of racial acceptability is key to understanding the ways in which oppression works not only in contemporary Brazil, but globally, usually without acknowledgement from those in privileged positions, such as myself.

Part of this dynamic is fidelity to outside norms, and suppression of internally-produced variation. While it is common for Brazilians to assume I don't speak Portuguese, it is even more likely that they will declare that "he speaks Portuguese better than us" – an expression that exemplifies the neo-colonial privileging of exogenesis in linguistic norms. Even more strangely, Brazilians who are fluent speakers of a higher-prestige variety of English than myself, nevertheless defer to my "native speaker" status, with expressions of linguistic insecurity. A Brazilian academic professor speaking after me at a conference asked "how can I follow a native speaker?" The high-fidelity to prestige norms remains overshadowed by the embodied norm of the actual "native speaker", even one with a divergent accent within the realm of white "inner-circle" settler societies.

### ***BH é o Texas: Subaltern Englishes in Brazil***

*Looking for some critical response, I scroll through the repostings of "Life is not an English language school where the nigga speaks slowly for you to understand. Life is a guy from regional Texas." It becomes clear that the aphorism is mostly posted by Brazilian university students who are going, or have been, on exchange to "inner-circle" English speaking countries, and it is met with approval as an astute observation and truism. The meaning is flipped, however, when I find it posted together with the phrase "BH is Texas"<sup>6</sup>, the title of a Carioca funk song about the city of Belo Horizonte, comparing it to Texas – making reference to the rural atmosphere of both, as well as their alternative music scenes, excluded from the axis of major urban centres (New York-Los Angeles, Rio-São Paulo). The song is clever and entertaining, and its video clip is shot in locations I know well, in the Serra complex of favelas, the largest in the state of Minas Gerais and second largest in Brazil.*

*The song "BH is Texas" elicits a sense of pride and solidarity amongst the residents of the city, and particularly the peripheral urban spaces named in the lyrics. Although it uses English, the cultural and linguistic repertoires that are mobilised are those of hip-hop and African American Vernacular English. In the context of this cultural production, I am not a relevant point of reference or authority, at least not in my capacity as a white "native speaker".*

<sup>6</sup> BH is a nickname for Belo Horizonte, capital of the state of Minas Gerais.

*I am reminded of a moment when a DJ from an isolated part of the Amazon asked me whether I could understand the English lyrics of a song he was playing. Although I (correctly) suspected it was him singing, I confessed that I could not make sense of them. He was somewhat nonplussed, but it was clear that my opinion was not of vital importance to his musical project, situated in the world of electronic music where repetition, remixing, and aesthetic uses of language create new meanings, nor for his Brazilian, and subsequently German, audiences. When I recently checked, around half of his published lyrics are in English, others having published translations into Portuguese. This is not “my” English. I am, at best, merely a participant in communities that use and transform English for new purposes and situations that are, for the most part, thoroughly Brazilian. It could be – and sometimes is – an experience of estrangement to discover Black, working class and queer Brazilian youth “taking over” English and using it in ways that are “unacceptable” to my “native speaker” self. But these are communities to which I am also connected in other ways, as a migrant to Brazil who also has a range of social, political, linguistic and affective engagements outside of those defined by the “native speaker” identity that is foregrounded in interactions in educational and elite settings.*

These experiences speak to the growing chasm between language ideology promoted in the teaching of English, and the realities of hybrid linguistic practices (RAJAGOPALAN, 1999, 2012). They show the importance of local linguistic practices that mobilise resources circulating globally (PENNYCOOK, 2007b). Recent research, focused on migrant communities, identifies spaces of translanguaging that involved the discursive construction of identities through plurilingual practices that move between, and extend, such existing linguistic repertoires and structures (WEI, 2011; LEWIS; JONES; BAKER, 2012).

Although linguistic hybridity is a well-established theme in applied linguistics, as yet there appear to be few applications of these to the context of appropriation of non-standard forms of English by Brazilians (SCHULTZ, 2013; FRANCESCON; SENEFONTE; DE ALMEIDA BARONAS, 2014; ALVES; BATTISTI, 2015). New phenomena, such as virtual communities of Brazilians who address questions of race, gender, sexuality and social status in their online interactions, supported by linguistic resources and cultural references associated with Black and LGBTQ English, are

emerging and present further challenges to the “native speaker” model (WINDLE, 2015). Importantly, such practices show the productive capacities of English, freed from the constraints of reproducing meanings and forms that are acceptable and intelligible to hypothetical “native speakers” (CANAGARAJAH, 2006; PENNYCOOK, 2007a; MOITA LOPES, 2008; PENNYCOOK, 2010). The most prominent example of subaltern or counterhegemonic appropriations of English as a vector of solidarity between oppressed groups is through the hip-hop movement (PENNYCOOK, 2007a), particularly in relation to Black identities and “peripheral” urban communities and extending into some classroom practices (RICHARDSON, 2003; RICHARDSON, 2006; HILL, 2008; SOUZA, 2011). English in Brazil is also part of linguistic practices that affirm LGBTQ identities, most notably those associated with Queers of Colour communities (FERGUSON, 2004; LA FOUNTAIN-STOKES, 2009; MOITA LOPES, 2010; NELSON, 2012; MELO; MOITA LOPES, 2014; WINDLE, 2014).

### Conclusion

Recounting critical moments in the experiences of an English-speaking migrant to Brazil presents an initial paradox – that of the exclusion of particular social identities from the category of migrant, and their separation into popular notions of “gringo” and expatriate, that are closely tied to the racially unmarked, but implicitly white, figure of the “native speaker”. The opening example, used in teaching, shows how although a term may be in English, it may nevertheless not be meaningful outside of the local, Brazilian, context of its production, at least not to monolingual “native speakers” from developed nations. Instead, other settings, such as India and South Africa, in which English is used by “non-native speakers” may be far more relevant.

Another series of interactions foregrounds the power of the “native speaker” and “gringo” categories as forms of social privilege, and these are theorised with reference to the concept of “racial acceptability”, drawing on the idea of embodied racial capital as a form of social power. A close analysis of an uncomfortable experience with an online aphorism, and

its failure to translate into a pedagogical “critical moment” highlight the ongoing power of colonial tropes that debase colonised peoples as lazy or corrupt, define them by an absence of culture, language or intelligence, and affirm European superiority (SPURR, 1993). Cultural and racial inferiority that was the foundation of the colonial system, and in which Black populations occupied the lowest rung, continues in neo-colonial definitions of third world populations (FANON, 1967; PENNYCOOK, 1998) that are reflected in memes and aphorisms that circulate in contemporary Brazil.

The final experiences related point to the heterogeneity of English and its separation from the “native speaker” (KACHRU, 1992a; RAJAGOPALAN, 2011). Theories of translanguaging, situated in analysis of the processes of globalisation, help us to understand how, within interactions and discourses, linguistic repertoires that include English are circulated and used to construct new identities (OTSUJI; PENNYCOOK, 2010; BLOMMAERT; RAMPTON, 2011; RUBDY; ALSAGOFF, 2013). Both the hybrid linguistic practices themselves and scholarly study of them offer possibilities for challenging native speaker ideology and showing how English can be part of affirming oppressed identities linked to race, gender, sexuality and social class. This is an urgent task for Brazilian researchers and teachers – as well as for “native speakers” like myself, who have an obligation to do more than merely bask in the privilege afforded by current language ideologies.

One way this can be done is by arguing, as I have here, that English in Brazil is not an exogenic linguistic entity, but also, and increasingly, endogenic. Rather than the reception of external norms (and fidelity to them), the internal production of new, creative, linguistic practices must be valued. In order to break down the role of language ideology in maintaining social inequalities we need to ask, in relation to English in Brazil, who can produce? Who can appropriate symbolic profits? Where is this “native speaker fidelity” market institutionalised? Work that celebrates the creative production of “subaltern” groups using English must also ask these questions, and seek out the traces of language ideology that undoubtedly remain even after the “native speaker” has been effectively sidelined as a reference point.

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### **Abstract**

#### **Identidade social e ideologia da língua: desafiando as visões hegemônicas do inglês no Brasil**

*Este artigo procura investigar as identidades sociais ligadas ao inglês no Brasil conectando estas a ideologias linguísticas e refletindo sobre como elas podem ser desafiadas. Baseia-se na narração em primeira pessoa de "momentos críticos" na perspectiva de um migrante "falante nativo" de língua inglesa para o Brasil. As reflexões identificam como a raça está intimamente ligada à categoria "falante nativo", teorizada através das noções de "aceitabilidade racial" e "capital racial", desenhando-se em uma perspectiva teórica de Bourdieu. O artigo conclui com exemplos de desafios ao modelo de "falante nativo" nas práticas linguísticas híbridas da juventude brasileira.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Ideologia linguística. Migração. Identidade racial. Inglês como língua adicional. autoetnografia.*