

| | | |
|--|-------------------|-----|
| A ESTILÍSTICA E O ESTUDO DAS EXPRESSÕES IDIOMÁTICAS: EXEMPLOS DO ESPANHOL E DO PORTUGUÊS | Eliane Roncolatto | 105 |
|--|-------------------|-----|

| | | |
|--|------------------------|-----|
| O ENSINO DA TRADUÇÃO: HÁ UMA METODOLOGIA EFICAZ? | Cristiane Roscoe Bessa | 117 |
|--|------------------------|-----|

| | | |
|---|-------------|-----|
| A INTERSECÇÃO LINGÜÍSTICA - O BILINGÜISMO DA COMUNIDADE NIPO-BRASILENSE: ESTUDO DE CASO | Yuko Takano | 129 |
|---|-------------|-----|

What's wrong with a Brazilian accent?

Ana Maria Ferreira Barcelos
Universidade Federal de Viçosa

Resumo: Este artigo relata resultados de um estudo em que as atitudes de brasileiros, reveladas na mídia escrita, em relação ao sotaque estrangeiro e ao próprio sotaque quando falando inglês são investigadas. Através da análise de conteúdo de artigos de jornais e de revistas, os resultados indicam que existe uma crença comum de que sotaque estrangeiro é algo a ser eliminado da aprendizagem de línguas. Além disso, a análise dos artigos sugere um preconceito contra certas variedades de inglês. O artigo traz implicações de tais atitudes e conclui com sugestões para uma reflexão no ensino de línguas.

Palavras-chave: sotaque, ensino de línguas, atitude.

1. Introduction

I don't have an American or a British accent.
What's wrong with a Brazilian accent?

This conversation took place in 1990, one year after I graduated from college with a degree in Portuguese and English. I was talking to an American who was visiting Brazil. For the first time, somebody had questioned the belief that I should sound as a native speaker of those

varieties of English (American or British) – a belief that is indeed part of the culture of learning and teaching English in Brazil, as I try to show in this paper.

Accent in a foreign language is considered one of the many aspects of individual differences in language learning (Ellis, 1994). Some researchers have suggested that there is a critical period for learners to acquire native-like proficiency (Long, 1990, cited in Ellis, 1994). Others have argued that it is almost impossible for language learners to acquire a native-like pronunciation (Garret, 1992; Morley, 1991) or even desirable (Strevens, 1997). These studies often focus on phonological and phonetic aspects of accent. But few studies have addressed social attitudes towards accent and how this is related to questions of power and ideology (Lippi-Green, 1997).

In this paper, I attempt to explore attitudes Brazilians have towards accents in general and towards their own accent when speaking English as portrayed in the media, i.e. newspapers and magazines. In order to do that, I look at a few articles from issues of *Folha de São Paulo* online and some issues from

Veja. For many years, the native-speaking pronunciation has been the norm for foreign language learners. However, researchers have started questioning the globalization of English as a form of linguistic imperialism. It is thus opportune to ask to what extent it is worth having a native accent and what effect this may have on language learners. In this paper, I draw insights offered by studies on linguistic imperialism (Philipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994) and language identity (Peirce, 1995; Lippi-Green, 1997; Faust, 1997) to interpret the Brazilian's attitudes towards foreign accents found in the print media. The results may help teachers and learners to become more aware of some beliefs about accents.

2. Accent, language identity and linguistic imperialism

In the next sections, I first explore the definition of accent and then, I discuss studies on language identity and linguistic imperialism.

2.1. Defining accent

The word "accent" comes from Latin *accentus* meaning *cantus*, song, chant, and from the Greek *prosodia*, prosody, literally it means "song added to speech" (The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology, 1966, p. 7). This is a fortunate definition. If we listened carefully to our language we would listen to its music and perhaps, we would be able to hear the many different "songs" around us, including our own.

The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics (1994) defines accent as a "system of speech-sounds and their

combinatorial possibilities of any spoken variety of a language" (p. 8). The concept of accent involves differences in the phonemic framework; that is, the number of phonemes available in a language.

Another definition of accent comes from the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (1982) – "a characteristic pronunciation, esp., (a) one determined by the regional or social background of the speaker and (b) one determined by the phonetic habits of the speaker's native language carried over to his use of another language" (p. 71). This definition emphasizes one of the most distinguishing features of accents – gatekeeping. In other words, accents, most of the time, "determine" the origin of the speaker, be it one's social class, region, or native language. A person with an accent is a person who can be "spotted" anywhere (or almost anywhere) as "(not) one of us." Indeed, this is a popular belief – that only certain people from certain regions, countries, social classes, and ethnic groups have an "accent" (meaning a "bad accent"). Similar myths are common even in dictionary definitions of accent as pointed out by Lippi-Green (1997).

Lippi-Green (1997) cites the definition of accent according to the Oxford English Dictionary (1989), which states that accent "may include mispronunciation of vowels or consonants, misplacing of stress, and misinflection of a sentence" (p. 58, emphasis on the original). She comments that this definition implicitly assumes that there is a correct way of pronouncing words and sentences – as seen by the choices of words: mispronunciation, misplacing, and misinflection. However, as Lippi-Green explains, it does not

explicitly name which correct pronunciation this is. Accent is defined as the deviation from the norm, but it is not clear what norm this is. Definitions such as these are also common in articles about accent. Koster and Koel (1993) have defined accent as "the sum of deviations from the norm" (p. 73). These definitions are very similar to the definition of error found in Ellis (1994) as "a deviation from the norms of the target language" (p. 51). In this sense, then, accent would be considered an error.

In this paper, I adopt Lippi-Green's definition of accent. She mentions the following aspects which are widely recognized elements in distinguishing one variety of language from another: (a) prosodic features: intonation (patterns of pitch contours, stress patterns, tempo of speaking); and (b) segmental features: vowel and consonant sounds. She defines accent as "loose bounds of prosodic and segmental features distributed over geographic and/or social space" (p. 42).

The American Heritage Dictionary and the Dictionary of Applied Linguistics present an important aspect in the definition of accent – the distinction between first language (L1) accent and second language (L2) accent. Lippi-Green also distinguishes between L1 accent and L2 accent and defines L2 accent as the "breakthrough of native language phonology into the target language" (p. 43). Hughes and Trudgill (1979, cited in Garret, 1992, p. 295) have defined foreign accent as a "variety of pronunciation." Leather, (1983, cited in Garret, 1992, p. 295) also stated that a foreign accent could be considered more a foreign variety

close to the native variety because it contains some of the pronunciation of the native language.

All these definitions share the view that accent is different combinations of speech sounds in any language (or variety of language). Yet, none of these definitions emphasize the fact that accent, like language, is closely related to one's identity. One of the assumptions of this paper is that accent "fulfills the function of demonstrating the bonding or solidarity that holds within a group of some kind; an accent is a marker of group identity" (Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics, p. 10). As suggested before, accent serves as one of the first factors that will allow others to pinpoint the speaker as belonging to a certain country, social class, or ethnic group, for "when I speak like you, I say I am like you, when I speak differently I say I am different" (Michael Newman mnehc@cumywm.blnetl).

2.2. Language and identity

The language we speak and how we speak tells a lot about ourselves. Our language is our world and it influences how we perceive the world. Language is the way we have of establishing and advertising our identities. The way we relate to others, the groups we choose to become a part of, the power we have or lack thereof, are all determined through language (Lippi-Green, 1997). As each individual is unique, so it is expected that we have language variation. This variation accounts for our linguistic needs within a particular community.

Learning a foreign language (FL) presents special difficulties since it is so

intertwined with questions of self, language ego, identity, and accent. As H. D. Brown (1994, cited in Foust, 1997, p. 28) explains:

Your self identity is inextricably bound up with your language, for it is in the communicative process – the process of sending out messages and having them 'bounced' back that such identities are confirmed, shaped, and reshaped.

If others perceive our language or accent in a negative way, this will most certainly bring damage to our identities (Lippi-Green, 1997) and because of that, some people may try to get rid of their accents. Yet, that can also be a problem. Accent is so bound up with language identity that "if we lose a native accent, we lose part of our identity" (Foust, 1997, p. 28). Moreover, having a native-like pronunciation is no guarantee of social acceptability as Kramsch (1997) and Lippi-Green (1997) pointed out.

Peirce (1995) in her work with women immigrants in Canada focuses on the concept of social identities in language learning and in the notion of investment. Social identities refer to the multiple nature of the subject (hence the plural – identities) and portray the individual as diverse, contradictory, and dynamic. The individual subjectivity is structured by relations of power. Peirce introduces the concept of investment, which is defined as the relationship of the language learner to the changing social world. The concept of investment shows learners as complex social beings with multiple desires. As Peirce explains:

who they are and how they relate to the social world." (p. 18)

Peirce gives the example of two of her subjects Eva and Felicia. Eva "was silenced when the customers in her workplace made comments about her accent" and Felicia "felt most uncomfortable speaking English in front of Peruvians who speak English fluently" (p. 19). These comments illustrate the importance of accent in learners' social identities and how language can be used for discrimination and control of other people.

Although accent is tied to our identity and serves to demonstrate the bonding and solidarity within a group, it does not necessarily mean that one would rank his or her accent most highly. In many cases, the opposite happens: one ranks other accents higher. Other times a conflict may be created: to retain one's accent or to adopt what is considered a "more superior" or more prestigious accent. The answer of each person will vary according to which pressure is felt to be more important, since accent is also a marker of an individual's identity, and this includes group membership, both actual and desired (Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics, 1994).

The choice of retaining or suppressing our own native accent will be heavily influenced, in many cases, by how others perceive our accent. Perceptions of accents are related to our ideology filters and are associated with certain groups of people, making some accents be perceived as "cute" such as the French accent, or "bad" such as Hispanic accents in the USA. According to Lippi-Green (1997) "Asian, Indian, Middle Eastern, and Spanish accents

are not acceptable; apparently French, German, British, Swedish accents are, regardless of the communication difficulties those languages may cause in the learning of English" (p. 146).

Koster and Koet (1993) cite a study by Cunningham-Anderson & Engstrand, (1989) which suggests that there are subjective differences in how native and nonnative listeners perceive accents. These differences are responsible for listeners' impression that the speaker is friendly or unfriendly, attractive or unattractive, standoffish or forthcoming, pompous or modest. The authors explain that some listeners decide based on certain features in the pronunciation what nationality a speaker is and then may ascribe certain personality characteristics to the speaker because of previous experiences or stereotypical notions with regard to that particular group. The authors explain that as a result of such a subjective assessment, errors that from a linguistic point of view might be regarded as very serious – such as the substitution of one phoneme for another, or a deviant intonation or rhythm – may well be considered minor errors or even assets.

2.3. The native-speaker as the norm

Several researchers have pointed out the idealized notion of the native-speaker in the language teaching field. The notion of the ideal native speaker is tied to the idea of prescriptivism, i.e., that there is one correct way and only one model to follow – the native speaker (Phillipson, 1992). This conception is dangerous because it does not consider different contexts where English may

develop. In such contexts such as the expanding circle (Kachru, 1995), the model for "accent" may not be the native speaker, but an educated variety of English spoken locally (Sirevans, 1987; Adger, 1997).

Other researchers doubt that a perfect pronunciation is a realistic or necessarily desirable goal for everyone because of the difficulty of defining perfect pronunciation – "what is perfect? Which native speaker are we talking about?" (Morley, 1991, p. 499). Furthermore, there is the problem with the concept of intelligibility. According to Morley, "Intelligibility may be as much in the mind of the listener as in the mouth of the speaker" (p. 499). In other words, the way listeners judge other non-native speakers depend on the preconceived ideas listeners have about non-native speakers in general (including their accent) and the personality and accent of any individual non-native speaker in particular.

Garret (1992), similarly to Morley (1991), states that a 'native-like' standard pronunciation is "in any event a goal that is not attainable for most learners" (p. 296). He believes that in some cases learners may be perceived as overarticulated and unassimilated to native speaker ears. In addition, according to Garret, the model of perfection often set by teachers may bring problems to students. Some students may not be aware of the distinctions between different registers, varieties, or social meanings of a standard pronunciation. Garret believes that this can make native speakers angry and force them to emphasize the distinctions between themselves and the "out group" of non-native speakers (p. 297).

2.4. English as an international language

Lippi-Green (1997) talks about the "discourse of homogenization," i.e., "a world in which we are all the same because we buy the same things and eat the same food." This "mantra," according to Lippi-Green "is repeated so often by the media that it has come to be accepted as a common sense truth" (p. 134). The discourse of sameness, of just "one world" contributes to our ignorance towards other languages and other accents. The idea is that everybody has the same identity. This aspect has become quite apparent with the common phrases "English as an international language," "English as a global language," and the logos that accompany them giving the idea that we live in a "small world" in which everybody speak the same language. This is a dangerous notion which carries a bit of triumphalism about it (Pennycook, 1998) and ignores multiculturalism, multilingual cultures, and thus, accents.

The discourse of homogenization is related to the arguments to promote English proposed by Phillipson (1992). These are important here in order to understand why speakers might think necessary to "sound native." According to Phillipson, the arguments are passed out as common sense. The arguments are intrinsic (what English is), extrinsic (what English has) and functional (what English does). The intrinsic argument shows English as a rich, varied, noble, and interesting language. The extrinsic argument refers to the resources in English such as textbooks, dictionaries, grammar books, rich literature, trained

teacher, expert, etc. The functional argument has to do with English as a "global and international language," which brings modernization, science, and technology.

This last argument, according to Phillipson, may be responsible for the fact that many people in many countries identify English speakers as belonging to an economically privileged community. This seems to be an attempt to be empowered, to gain status, to identify with the powerful group. The desire foreign speakers have to suppress their foreign accents is probably related to their aspiration to belong to that privileged community of English speakers. This is probably related to what Pennycook (1997) calls the "cultural capital" of English. According to him, because of its economical power, English has more symbolic capital than other languages and thus, is "seen as of more worth than other languages, of conferring greater possibilities – social, cultural, economic – on those that learn it," (p. 2). English then acts as a "crucial gatekeeper to social and economic progress" (p. 13). Because of the importance of English as "an international language," some people may start to demean their own language, or their own native accent, in an attempt to belong to this privileged world where English is spoken. Speaking English without an accent becomes a crucial step to make part of the economic power that English-speaking countries can offer.

Pennycook (1994) explains how English has acquired an international prestige and a privileged position. Because of that, in some places, English has contributed to inequalities. What happens, in Brazil, for instance, is that

the elite will do all they can to educate their children in English (mainly in American schools or in expensive private courses) in order to guarantee that they will get the best possible jobs in the future. It is believed that by studying in an American school these children will not have a foreign accent, but a native-like accent, thus increasing their chance of belonging to a privileged society. English in Brazil has been used as a symbol of power and has contributed to the enormous distance between social classes. It is used in the media, in novels, in any place to show status and power. Brands of products that want to target upper classes for instance will use an English name preferably. Furthermore, anybody who wants to put himself/herself as superior will criticize how other Brazilians sound when they speak English¹.

The studies reviewed have served the purpose of shedding light on two important aspects about accent. First, everybody has an accent. Second, accent is tied to our self and to our identities. This fact may pose several problems for second language speakers who may be caught up in the dilemma of maintaining their accent as part of their identities versus suppressing their accent because of the promise of being accepted and having access to the privileges of English-speaking countries. These social aspects need to be taken into account when we interpret comments of non-native speakers about their desire to sound native.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore how the print media portrays Brazilian attitudes towards their accents in general, as well as their own accent when speaking English. To investigate this I decided to take a look at articles in some of the online editions of *Folha de São Paulo* and *Veja*. I used the search engines provided by *Folha* and *Veja*, using the word *sotaque* (accent in Portuguese). In addition to searching in *Folha* and *Veja*, I also searched the web for Brazilian sites about the topic. I did not find many, but I did find the site of a Brazilian private English course, which I chose to include in the data because it dealt specifically with accent and the notion of the "ideal native-speaker."

Altogether, I analyzed eight articles and one website. The articles were analyzed according to procedures of qualitative analysis (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The themes were found in the several articles and then put into common categories.

4. Results

The themes found in the articles referred to (a) Brazilian perceptions of a foreign accent in Portuguese and (b) Brazilian attitudes towards a Brazilian accent when speaking English.

1) For a discussion of the influence of English in Brazil see Paiva (1996), Moita Lopes (1996) e Rajagopalan (2003).

4.1. Brazilian Perceptions of a Foreign Accent

The articles analyzed suggest that Brazilians have a very negative attitude towards foreign accents in Brazil. This negative attitude take three forms – intolerance to foreign accents in Portuguese, discrimination towards other varieties of English other than British or American, and admiration for those who are able to speak English without a foreign accent.

4.1.1. Intolerance to foreign accents in Portuguese.

In *Folha de São Paulo* (FSP), it was possible to find instances of negative attitudes towards foreign accents of non-native speakers of Portuguese. Phrases such as “Her accent is irritable”, “with an annoying accent”, “strong accent” about foreigners who were trying to speak or sing in Portuguese (12/21/96, p. 4-10) are common.

In one article entitled “The accent group” in *Veja* magazine (10/16/96, p. 38-39), they talk about singers from other countries who have recorded their songs in Portuguese. They mention the case of a Spanish singer who recorded one song in Portuguese, but whose song radios refused to play. The radios explained it was not possible to understand what the singer was singing.

The author of the article points out that what has been happening is an “Americanization” of the Brazilian audience as well as of other countries” (p. 39). They mention that in the 40’s Brazilians used to listen to Argentine tangos, or to Italian and French music in the 60’s and. However, in a global

market, what you have is a bilingual world, in which audiences accept Portuguese and English, but cannot face songs in other languages.

The singers may become multilingual, but the sad part is that we become monolingual or bilingual (with English as the second language) and lose our tolerance for other languages and other accents. The impression one has is that our neighbors have to record in Portuguese in order to make it in Brazil. I believe this has to do with the cultural capital of English (Pennycook, 1997), as I mentioned in the literature review section.

Another article in *Folha de São Paulo* showed how street vendors fool tourists who do not speak Portuguese or speak with a “heavy accent”. They charge the tourists more, or change the price if the tourist with a “heavy accent” tries to argue about the price (FSP, 09/22/96, p. 4-6).

4.1.2. Discrimination towards other varieties of English

One of the articles exposes a Brazilian prejudice towards other varieties of English, such as Australian English. An article in *Veja* warns parents who send their kids to learn English in Australia: “True English is learned in England or USA. Staying in Australia will only give you fluency in Australian – that language of peculiar pronunciation which causes damage to the British ears” (Veja, 11/27/96, p.18, emphasis added).

4.1.3. No accent

Many of the articles suggest the prestige and status of non-native

speakers who speak English without an accent, as one article on FSP (p. 1-13, 12/06/96) shows: “Albright speaks and reads besides English (without an accent, contrary to Kissinger), French, Russian, and Polish.”

4.2. Brazilian Attitudes towards a Brazilian Accent

Garret (1992) mentions that non-native speakers are usually more severe in their judgements of accents. Usually they are teachers of the particular foreign language. This may be one of the reasons for the strong negative attitude of Brazilians towards their own accent. One of the most derogatory comments made by Brazilians about other Brazilians’ English is *inglês macarrônico*. The term *macarrônico* comes from the Italian *maccheronico*², and refers to any language that is written or spoken incorrectly. It is a widely used adjective among Brazilians to criticize other Brazilians’ English. By doing so, one puts oneself as better speaker than the people one is criticizing. In *Folha de São Paulo*, they wrote about a senator who was trying to speak English with executives from Honda in Brazil. The newspaper said the senator “tried to initiate conversation with them in an *inglês macarrônico*, with an accent from Paraíba” (*Folha de São Paulo*, 09/22/96, p. 1-4). Paraíba is one of the poorest states in the Northeast region of Brazil. Thus, the author of the article is trying to suggest that the senator’s northern

accent, which is highly discriminated in Brazil, may contribute to his *inglês macarrônico*.

Another derogatory comment usually directed towards the quality of the English spoken by Brazilians is *inglês de brasileiro* (literally, Brazilians’ English). The comment is usually used to criticize how Brazilians speak English. These comments give us an idea of the kind of attitude towards accents and towards a Brazilian accent when speaking English. In articles in *Veja* magazine and *Folha de São Paulo* it is possible to find several instances of discrimination against a Brazilian accent. The first article is a review of a CD-ROM which teaches English for kids. The article states: “Another negative aspect of the CD-ROM is the speaker’s pronunciation which has a ‘strong Brazilian accent’” (*Folha de São Paulo*, p. 3-11, 11/18/96, emphasis added).

Another article puts accent as the “villain of flights” (FSP, 07/13/97, p. 1). Accent is shown as the cause for “terrible flight accidents.” According to the article, the orders from the control tower such as speed and altitude information can be easily misunderstood because of the way speakers of some countries pronounce the word. The newspaper does not mention any kind of accident that has been caused by accents. It does mention that Brazilian pilots are known as “say it again airline” in the North-American airports, such as Los Angeles, for example.

2) According to the *Dizionario Della Lingua Italiana* (1961), *maccheronico* refers to the Latin spoken in the 15th century by ignorant and rude people, “lovers of *maccheroni*”. The term came to mean any language that is altered, ungrammatical, full of barbarisms and not pure.

In the field of teaching English as a foreign language, one finds many myths about accents and an overestimation of the native-speaker. Such is the case of a web site of a Brazilian Private English Course. They mention that "the Portuguese of English (*inglês portuguêsado*) brings damage to the students." Thus, in this course the students "acquire the authentic correct North-American or British pronunciation, without an accent, through direct contact with authentic representatives of the North-American or British culture" (emphasis added). They also advertise "a clinic for the elimination of accent" and propagate the myth that accent is like a disease that kids can catch from the teacher "forever." Advertisements such as these only reinforce the current belief that it is a shame to have a Brazilian accent. According to Lippi-Green (1997), in linguistic terms, this fear that children will pick up the accent of the foreign teacher has no foundation. "Children learn their phonologies first from their families and then from their peers, and that process is largely finished by the time they get to school. Phonetics and phonology do not pass from adults to children like viruses" (p. 123).

The results of such negative attitudes towards accent can be perceived in students' beliefs about learning English in Brazil. First, they want to sound native-like. Secondly, they believe they cannot learn "the (native) accent in Brazil" but would have to travel to the target language country to "learn the accent and perfect the intonation so that it becomes more natural [meaning more native-like]" (Barcelos, 1995, p. 102). These comments show that these

students a) believe that a native accent can only be learned in the target-country and b) believe they have to have an American or British accent.

5. Analysis and discussion

The definition of accent as *contus* or song deconstructs the myth of having no accent. In other words, according to this definition, everybody has an accent. Although most of the definitions analyzed in this paper did not associate accent and identity, the results have suggested the close relationship between accent, identity and, in some cases, self-esteem. The non-native speaker may experience the dilemma of maintaining his or her accent (and language identity) or adopting a more native-speaker pronunciation. In each case, there are lots of factors involved in this decision such as (a) the desire or lack of belonging and identifying oneself with the foreign culture, (b) economic possibilities that may open or close, and (c) the person's own belief about how his or her accent is perceived by himself or herself and others.

The myth of non-accent is persistent though and this brief analysis suggests Brazilians' negative attitude towards a foreign accent. This was confirmed by the use of adjectives such as "irritable," "annoying," "strong," "heavy." A person with a foreign accent in Brazil may be an easy target for street vendors who will increase the product price knowing that the person is not from there. Besides showing the negative attitude, this fact also reinforces the notion of accent as a gatekeeper.

Another interesting aspect in Brazilian perceptions about foreign

accents refers to the social prestige of certain varieties. According to one article, Australian English and its "peculiar" pronunciation do not seem adequate for Brazilian learners of English. This may be related to the economic influence of USA (stronger from the 60's on) and Britain (before the 60's, along with France) in Brazil's history and social life³. Thus, the notion of an "ideal native-speaker" in Brazil does not refer to "speakers of English" but seems to refer only to native-speakers of American or British English. There seems to be no recognition that there may be other varieties of English.

Embedded in this notion is also the argument that a non-desirable accent is like a "disease" that people will catch. This is probably the main reason why the upper class in Brazil sends their children to American schools so that they can speak with an American accent. This is one of the aspects of linguistic imperialism as pointed out by Phillipson (1992), the desire to identify with the most powerful country because it may provide greater social and economic possibilities.

This notion of English as a cultural capital is even stronger in the last theme identified in the results – Brazilian attitudes towards their own accent. Derogatory terms and expressions such as *inglês macarrônico* and *inglês de brasileiro* are used to either the incorrect grammar or the "terrible" accent some Brazilian speakers supposedly have. In many cases, this practice may be associated with the discrimination against some regional accents in Brazilian Portuguese. There

seems to be a belief that students who have a Brazilian accent whereas if they have a native-speaker teacher they will acquire a native-speaker like pronunciation. A Brazilian accent is portrayed as disease that learners should prevent.

One of the strongest negative attitudes against Brazilian accents was found in the web site of a private English course which confirms the notion of the ideal native speaker as the norm in the teaching of English as a foreign language. The implicit argument is that a Brazilian accent is not desirable and that it is possible to speak without an accent. As shown in the findings, this kind of attitude may contribute to Brazilian students' beliefs about the role of the target-language and foreign country as to the teaching of English – in the target-country they learn the accent whereas in the foreign country they learn the grammar (Barcelos, 1995).

The results suggest that Brazilians seem to have a problem with their own identity and their accent. A possible explanation for that may be related to Brazil's economic position as a developing country. English is seen as a gatekeeper for social and economic opportunities as explained by Pennycook (1994, 1997) and Phillipson (1992). This is very problematic for a country's own identity and I believe for students' identities as well. Very few students seem to believe that Brazilian speakers can serve as good speaking models for them. The general belief is that if they cannot speak with a native accent, they should

3) For a historical view on the influence of the USA in Brazilian society, see Tota (2000).

not try to speak English. And advertisements of language courses such as the one analyzed here only help to reinforce that belief. Further studies could investigate the influence of this type of propaganda in students' beliefs.

6. Implications and conclusion

The results of this study, although initial, suggest several implications related to general approaches for dealing with this aspect in the classroom. The first implication, based on the concept of language awareness (James & Garret, 1992), indicates that teachers need to raise students' awareness about accents in general, attitudes towards accents in general, helping them to become more sensitive to language variety and more realistic about their own goals. Most importantly, we need to give them choices in their decisions of identity, self, and accent in a foreign language and help them to reflect on the belief that they have to sound native.

Second, it is important to develop critical pedagogy as proposed by Pennycook (1994). This means that the realities of a third world country should be observed and students should be able to discuss aspects related to their own reality and explore its significance for their learning. As Pennycook put it:

A critical practice in English language teaching must start with ways of critically exploring students' cultures, knowledges and histories in ways that are both challenging and at the same time affirming and supportive. (p. 311).

For the Brazilian context this would mean that aspects of the use of English

in several aspects of Brazilian culture as well as attitudes towards foreign accents in language learning should be discussed in class. Benson (1995), for instance, has suggested explicit discussions about the role of English in China, among other things, as part of a more political kind of learner-training in Chinese language classrooms.

The third implication has to do with students' perceptions of their spoken language and with their participation in the classroom. If they believe a Brazilian accent is bad, they will probably either try to get rid of it or feel ashamed of their English. These two options may bring anxiety and sometimes reduce students' risk-taking approaches and participation in the classroom. Thus, we need to adopt a more conscious role of the current attitudes towards foreign accents in our own culture so that we are prepared to talk to students about it and help them to become aware of those attitudes.

Fourth, we need to provide students with adequate tools to become intelligible speakers. At the same time, we also need to help students to find their own voice by adopting a belief *deconstruction approach*. This approach consists of three steps. First, we should help students to examine their own beliefs about accents in general. I believe that by doing this we would be helping our students to be more tolerant to other accents and not to be ashamed of their own accent. It should be pointed out to students that accent is part of our identity and that everybody has an accent. Second, students should listen to different accents in their native language and in English as well. It would be good to show videos or listen

to tapes of native speakers of English with different accents, non-native speakers of English, and speakers of other varieties of English in addition to the British and American varieties. This would probably help to deconstruct the myth that one has to sound "American" or "British." Third, it is important to prepare students for diversity. This can be accomplished, besides listening to a variety of accents, by studying the history of their own native language and of English (or any other foreign language), so that they can become more tolerant to language change.

In conclusion, we can help students feel more comfortable with their accents by reflecting on the kinds of attitudes our society and other cultures have towards (foreign) accents. We can also encourage students to become more aware of the diversity of accents and languages and to become more tolerant about it. This will probably help them to lower their language anxiety and understand the link between accent and identity. Knowledge about the history of their own native language as well as that of the target language and its different accents may help them become more linguistically tolerant. This may foster the recognition that there is nothing wrong with a Brazilian accent.

References

- ADGER, C. T. Issues and implications of English dialects for teaching English as a second language. In: *TESOL Professional Papers* # 3, 1997. Disponible online: <http://www.tesol.edu/pubs/profpapers/odger1.html>. Capturado em 6/03/1999.
- AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY. *Second American Heritage Dictionary*. Second College Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982.
- ASHER, R. E. (Org.). *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*. (Vol. 1). New York: Pergamon Press, 1994
- BARCELOS, A. M. F. *A cultura de aprender lingua estrangeira (inglês) de alunos de Letras*. Dissertação de Mestrado, UNICAMP, São Paulo, 1995.
- BENSON, P. A critical view of learner training. In: *Learning Learning*, vol. 2, n. 2, p. 2-6, 1995.
- ELLIS, R. *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- FAUST, J. Z. Who am I in English? Developing a language ego. In: *The Journal of the Imagination in Language Learning*, vol. 4, p. 26-32, 1997.
- GARRET, P. Accommodation and hyperaccommodation in foreign language learners: contrasting responses to French and Spanish English speakers by native and non-native recipients. In: *Language & Communication*, vol. 12, n. 3/4, p. 295-315, 1992.
- JAMES, C. & GARRET, P. (Orgs.) *Language awareness in the classroom*. London: Longman, 1992.
- KACHRU, B. B. *World Englishes: Approaches, issues, and resources*. In: H. D. Brown and S. T. Gonzó. (Orgs.) *Readings on second language acquisition*. p. 229-260. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995.

- KOSTER, C. J. & KOEIT, T. The evaluation of accent in the English of Dutchmen. In: *Language Learning*, vol. 43, n. 1, p. 69-92, 1993.
- KRAMSCH, C. Culture and self in language learning. Disponível online: <http://www.britcoun.org/bulgaria/eltconf/papers/csl/index.htm>, 1997. Capturado em: 6/09/1999.
- LINCOLN, Y., & GUBA, E. *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1985.
- LIPPI-GREEN, R. *English with an accent: Language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- MOITA LOPES, L. P. *Oficina de Linguística Aplicada*. Campinas, SP: Mercado de Letras, 1996.
- MNEHC. Accents. Discussion on Teaching English as a Second Language. Disponível Email: TESL-L@CUNYWM.CUNYEDU. Dezembro 1, 1991.
- ONIONS, C. T. (Org.). *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- PANVA, V. L. M. de O. (Org.) *Ensino de Língua inglesa: Reflexões e experiências*. Campinas, SP: Pontes; Minas Gerais: Departamento de Letras Anglo-Gerâmicas, 1996.
- PERCE, B. N. Social identity, investment, and language learning. In: *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 29, n. 1, p. 9-31, 1995.
- PENNYCOOK, A. *English as an international language*. Singapore: Longman, 1994.
- PENNYCOOK, A. English and capital: Some thoughts. Disponível online: <http://langue.hyperchubu.ac.jp/fal/pub/lt/97/oct/pennycook.html>, 1997. Capturado em 08/09/1998.
- PENNYCOOK, A. *Disconnecting our global community: Trabalho apresentado na 32ª TESOL Annual Convention*. Seattle, WA, 17-21 Março, 1998.
- PHILLIPSON, R. *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- RAJAGOPALAN, K. The ambivalent role of English in Brazilian politics. In: *World Englishes*, vol. 22, n. 2), 91-101, 2003.
- RICHARDS, J. C., PLATT, J., & PLATT, H. *Dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. London: Longman, 1992.
- STREVEN, P. Cultural barriers to language learning. In Larry E. Smith (Org.) *Discourses across cultures: Strategies in World Englishes*. p. 169-178. New York: Prentice Hall, 1987.
- TOTA, A. P. *O imperialismo sedutor: A americanização do Brasil na época da segunda guerra*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000.

Artigos que fizeram parte dos dados.

- Allbright é naturalizada americana. In: *Folha de São Paulo*, 12/6/96, Disponível online: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/arquivos/A_Miami_do_Brasil, In: *Veja*, 07/17/96, p. 50-56.
- Babel Presidencial. In: *Folha de São Paulo*, 09/22/96. Disponível online: <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/arquivos>
- Como os imigrantes brasileiros sofrem para se adaptar a cultura americana. In: *Veja*, 07/17/96, p. 62-63
- FRANÇA, V. (Sept, 24 1997). Do you speak...? [Disponível online: <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/arquivos>
- MASSON, C. (Sept, 24 1997). Turma do Sotaque. Disponível online: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/arquivos/Sociologa_critica_CD_que_ensina_ingles. In: *Folha de São Paulo*, 11/18/96. Disponível online: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/arquivos/Sotaque_e_vilao_de_vaos. In: *Folha de São Paulo*, 07/13/97. [On-line] Available: <http://www.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidian/#130702.htm>
- SCHULTZ, R. (1997). Como escolher um programa de inglês. [On-line] Available: <http://www.english.sk.com.br/sk-como/html>