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Global Portuguese

Linguistic Ideologies in Late Modernity

Edited by
Luiz Paulo Moita-Lopes

ROUTLEDGE



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Global Portuguese

This book aims at deconstructing and problematizing linguistic ideologies related to Portuguese in late modernity and questioning the theoretical presuppositions which have led us to call Portuguese 'a language'. Such an endeavour is crucial when we know that Portuguese is a language which is increasingly internationalized, which is used as an official language on four continents (in ten countries) and which has come to play a relevant role in the so-called linguistic market on the basis of the geopolitical transformations in a multipolar world. The book covers a wide range of social, political and historical contexts in which 'Portuguese' is used (in Brazil, Canada, East-Timor, England, Portugal, Mozambique and Uruguay) and considers diverse linguistic practices. Through this critique, contributors chart new directions for research on language ideologies and language practices (including research related to Portuguese and other 'languages') and consider ways of developing new conceptual compasses that are better attuned to the sociolinguistic realities of the late modern era, in which people, texts and languages are increasingly in movement across national borders and those of digital networks of communication.

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Edited by Luiz Paulo Moita-Lopes

To Sergio Pontes da Silva, wherever he is . . .

No coração a gente tem é coisas igual ao que nem nunca
em mão se pode ter pertencente . . .

In our hearts, there are things like those which we can never
claim as belonging when in our hands . . .

João Guimarães Rosa

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Introduction: Linguistic Ideology

How Portuguese Is Being Discursively Constructed in Late Modernity

Luiz Paulo Moita-Lopes

A unitary language is not something given but is always in essence something posited—and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the reality of heteroglossia. [. . .] We are taking language not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated [. . .].

(Bakhtin, 1981: 270–271)

A CHANGING SOCIOLINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE AND CHANGING EPISTEMOLOGIES

The social, cultural, political, economic, diasporic and technological processes ushered in by globalization have created the conditions of late modernity¹ (Rampton, 2006; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). We now live in a world of time-space compression, of digital technology, of astounding sociocultural changes, of intense hybridization of different types (linguistic, cultural, discursive etc.), of hypersemiotization, of emphasized reflexivity about our social lives, of superdiversity, with cultures and communicative resources coexisting in the same place, with fluxes across physical and digital borders, and with virtually omnipresent capitalism, among other processes. This is a world in which language plays a central role. It is a world in which nothing relevant can be done without discourse, as the geographer Milton Santos (2000) has so acutely observed. This is an issue which needs to be taken into serious consideration, particularly in this book, where we interrogate what we mean by ‘Portuguese’.²

If it is a fact that the societies in which we live are being rapidly altered in a world of fluxes, in which people, texts, discourses and languages are increasingly in movement³ across national borders and those in the cyber world, it is necessary to rethink what we have called Portuguese “by shifting our gaze from stability to mobility” (Heller, 2011: 5). As Coupland (2010) points out, it has taken a long time for linguists to understand the relevance of theorizations about globalization to the field of language studies, unlike other areas of the social and human sciences. To my mind, this tendency is

due to the fact that linguists, in general, are still epistemologically bound by twentieth-century theorizations about language. The linguistic modernity in which we were educated, through theoretical-analytical tools which ignored the overwhelming theorizations about globalization, late modernity, post-structuralism, postcolonialism, post-nationalism, feminisms, sexualities, anti-racisms etc., which shook other fields of investigation and deconstructed the idealized logic of modernity based on the notion of a unitary, rational and centred subject. However, one should be aware of the attention paid to these theorizations in the vast field of language studies by some linguists, such as Woolard (1998), Irvine and Gal (2000), Pennycook (2001, 2007, 2010, 2012), Bauman and Briggs (2003), Rampton (2006), Moita-Lopes (2006/2013, 2013), Coupland (2010), Blommaert (2005, 2010), Blommaert and Rampton (2011), Heller (2010, 2011) and Duchêne and Heller (2012), among others, who work in a broadly interdisciplinary manner.

Given these major epistemological shifts, new theorizations about what we consider Portuguese are needed to address the different ways in which it has been constructed discursively in late modernity and to comprehend past understandings of Portuguese through different lenses. A language (and other linguistic theoretical constructs) is “a discursive project, rather than an established fact” (Woolard, 1998: 20). Moreover, as Makoni and Pennycook (2007: 2) have argued, “languages do not exist as real entities in the world [. . .]; they are, by contrast, the inventions of social, cultural and political movements”. This view poses a major challenge to the essentialist and representational view of language and “denaturalizes the idea that there are distinct languages and that a proper language is bounded, pure and composed of structured sounds, grammar and vocabulary designed for referring to things” (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011: 5). Like every discursive project, linguistic discursive projects are also oriented by ideologies,⁴ which linguistic anthropologists have called linguistic ideologies. Following Volósinov/Bakhtin (1929/1981), I understand that when we utter words in the world, we speak from a particular position, which places us ideologically in social life, bringing about particular semantic effects (Moita-Lopes, 2012).

Therefore, when we use language, we are oriented by specific linguistic ideologies: beliefs about language which guide everyday communicative practices (Kroskrity, 2004). As Irvine and Gal (2000: 35) have put it, language ideologies are

the ideas with which participants and observers [linguists, ethnographers, language-teaching syllabus designers, language policy designers etc.] frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and map those understandings onto people, events, and activities that are significant to them.

Linguistic ideologies also inform the sociocultural models of language in use with regard to what we call Portuguese. These include the ideologies that

surface in this book, as well as those elaborated by specialists in the general field of language studies.

From the point of view of users (speakers, writers etc.), different ideologies of language are relevant because, among other things, they end up influencing changes in the use of language forms. For example, gendered linguistic ideologies have increasingly shaped the use of particular lexical choices, in what is called Brazilian Portuguese, in feminist circles in cosmopolitan centres in Brazil. Thus, the use of *seres humanos* (human beings) or *pessoas* (people) is becoming more and more common in contexts in which, in the past, *o homem* (man) would have been chosen to refer to the human species. Likewise, a lot of feminists have preferred the use of *el@* to avoid the use of *ele* (he) to refer to a human being. This is a change which may, in the future, alter a so-called grammatical rule in what is considered to be standard Portuguese.

Linguistic ideologies are multiple and derive from specific political, cultural and economic perspectives. The purist beliefs which evaluate linguistic borrowings from one language to another negatively are also examples of linguistic ideologies. These have recently given rise to a debate in Brazilian society (Faraco, 2001), as well as in other parts of the world, about how English has been invading other languages (Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 2010). An attempt by a Communist Party senator to pass a law in the Brazilian Senate which would restrict the use of English in Brazil was not successful. Also, the recent international project aimed at elaborating the Common Orthographic Vocabulary for the Portuguese Language (Vocabulário Ortográfico Comum da Língua Portuguesa, VOC), funded by the CPLP (Comunidade de Países de Língua Portuguesa, or Community of Portuguese Language Countries), is another example of a linguistic ideology, one which has met with all kinds of difficulties (see Oliveira; Signorini, this volume, for contrastive reactions to the VOC both in Brazil and in Portugal).

The other type of linguistic ideology which is of interest in this volume is that which guides the work of language specialists. The choices made in the construction of theories about different languages being separate homogeneous units and theories about language in general are ultimately ideological choices. A chapter by Makoni and Meinhof (2006/2013) and a book edited by Makoni and Pennycook (2007), among others, provide good examples of how linguists constructed languages, and particular views of them, in the colonization of Africa and other parts of the world. These theoretical constructs were based on ideological positionings which deeply affected people's lives. Other examples of linguistic ideology, much quoted in the literature, are provided by Irvine and Gal (2000), who draw attention to what the supposed objectivity of linguists, and their analyses, did to Macedonian and Senegalese multilingualism, as a result of the importation of European colonizing theories of language (see also Pinto, this volume). The presupposition that each language should correspond to one nation/

people underlies such views. This presupposition was exported by European colonialisms in order to map Africa and other parts of the world according to the economic interests of European empires. What has conventionally been called modernist linguistic theory collaborated closely with the construction of such empires (Woolard, 1998) by creating nations with their corresponding languages, grammars, dictionaries etc. Such colonialist theorization defined what would count as a language and what would count as linguistic and national identity,⁵ contributing again and again to the classification of groups within local populations (Woolard, 1998). At the same time, in nineteenth-century Europe such theories constructed languages that were linked to the emergence of nation-states, differentiating and essentializing speakers and cooperating with the construction of empires and their languages (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011).

The linguistic ideologies we refer to in this book are theorizations elaborated by linguists⁶ aiming to change understandings of Portuguese⁷ and to influence language policies and school practices (see Keating, Solovova and Barradas; Bortolini, Garcez and Schlatter; Patel and Cavalcanti, this volume), as well as those constructed by speakers and writers of this language (see, for example, the chapters by Bortolini, Garcez and Schlatter and by da Silva, this volume). In both cases, changing understandings of language could have a far-reaching effect on people's lives. The authors in this volume understand that linguistic ideologies are beliefs, "whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world" (Woolard, 1998: 3), and that conceptualizations of language, or specific languages, are situated in certain socio-historical practices, both from the perspective of language users and from that of language specialists.

This position implies that no knowledge is privileged and that no theory is transparent or has special access to truth. "Truth", as Foucault (1979: 12) rightly observed, "is from this world". This is a crucial perspective in this book, and one that has still not been adopted by the large spectrum of scholars in language studies, particularly those who espouse positivist, objectivist, universalist and structuralist ideals of knowledge construction and who therefore overlook the ideological nature of such an enterprise. This view persisted throughout much of the twentieth century (and still persists!) in a modernist linguistics and in what Volóshinov/Bakhtin (1929/1981) described so aptly as an "abstract objectivist" view of language. Such a view is solely concerned with the internal structure of language, putting aside the fact that meaning is intrinsically ideological (Kroskrity, 2004).

Kroskrity (2004: 501–511) develops the notion of linguistic ideology as "a cluster concept, consisting of a number of converging dimensions". He draws attention to five dimensions which help to characterize linguistic ideologies although these dimensions overlap with one another. The first refers to the fact that linguistic ideologies reflect the interests of a specific social and cultural group. One of the examples he provides is that of the linguistic ideology of the standard language, which sociolinguistically devalues those

who do not have access to what is considered the legitimate language. In this way, political interests are vested in the very linguistic knowledge one has, as is any kind of knowledge (Kroskrity, 2004). The example already given concerning feminist linguistic ideology is another example related to the political interests of a group. The same could be said with regard to the theoretical views of a group of linguists who embrace a specific paradigm, as indicated in the examples of colonizing linguistics referred to above and, in fact, further exemplified in the linguistic ideologies underlying this book—these newer linguistic ideologies about the need to reconstruct what we mean by Portuguese in ways that are better aligned with the processes at work in late modernity.

The second dimension has to do with the fact that linguistic ideologies are varied since social meanings refer to the myriad social divisions of gender, social class, sexuality, race, nationality, clan etc., which define group membership. Therefore, feminist linguistic ideology may be understood as belonging to a specific group of women, that is, educated, urban, middle-class and, in Brazil, mostly white women. On the other hand, a linguistic ideology which erases gender differences may be understood as a means of naturalizing the fact that, socio-historically, men have been constructed as the most capable and more powerful members of society, and it is thus natural to refer to 'men' when one wishes to speak of the human species. It is in this way that specific linguistic ideologies are taken as true through naturalization processes which erase the interests they serve (specifically, here, those of patriarchy).

The third dimension has to do with the degree of awareness which participants of a specific group have of the linguistic ideologies they adopt. Those participating in our research do not always show explicit awareness of the linguistic ideologies which generate their uses of language, so, as researchers, we have to derive our analyses from their language practices. Kroskrity (2004) draws attention to typical sites of certain linguistic ideologies, such as churches and courts of justice, in which metapragmatic commentaries index participants' awareness of linguistic ideologies. Recently, while attending a trial related to a labour dispute in which only the judge and the lawyers were entitled to speak, I was surprised by a woman in the audience who addressed the judge at the end of the session: "I know I cannot speak, but I would like to thank you". As expected, the judge did not say a word. This metapragmatic commentary indexes the level of linguistic ideology awareness on the woman's part in this situation.

Another dimension of ideology to which Kroskrity (2004) refers is the fact that, traditionally, linguistic studies have ignored language users' linguistic and discursive awareness, a position which has been typical of modernist linguistics. The rationale for this has been that speakers' knowledge could 'contaminate' linguists' so-called objectivist and impartial linguistic analysis. Relying on the reading of 300 years of philosophy, political theory, anthropology and linguistics, Bauman and Briggs (2003) point out that a view of

language which separates people from their uses of language underlies the construction of modernist knowledge in the social and human sciences (see also Moita-Lopes, this volume) and that this has disquieting implications for ideologies of language purification and for the consequent devaluation of the language resources of people from lower social classes, who do not have a proper command of the so-called pure and legitimate language (see, in this volume, the chapters by Bortolini, Garcez and Schlatter; Carneiro; da Silva; and Patel and Cavalcanti in relation to the uses of the so-called legitimate varieties of Portuguese in different parts of the world: Uruguay, East-Timor,⁸ Canada and Mozambique as well as the contradictions thrown up by this issue in linguistic theorizing in Brazil, as pointed out by Pinto). It is to this tradition of modernist linguistics that Kroskrity (2000: 5) also refers, indicating that it originated from “a surgical removal of language from context, [which] produced an amputated ‘language’ that was the preferred object of the language sciences for most of the twentieth century”.

The fourth dimension to which Kroskrity (2004) refers is the fact that linguistic ideologies mediate between social structures and language in use. This mediation is marked by linguistic and discursive indexicalizations in actual language use which evoke language users’ sociocultural experiences, that is, indexical cues in identity performances and actual discursive practices. People indicate their awareness of the indexicalization choices they make and signal their ideological stances through their choices. As Kroskrity (2000: 7) argues:

Much of the meaning and hence communicative value that linguistic forms have for their speakers lies in the ‘indexical’ connections between the linguistic signs and the contextual factors of their use—their connection to speakers, settings, topics, institutions, and other aspects of their sociocultural worlds.

Of course, the meaning and communicative value of linguistic forms also lie in shared social experience. That is why Blommaert and Rampton (2011: 7) argue that indexicality is “a very rich site for the empirical study of ideology”. Irvine and Gal’s (2000) well-known work is cited by several authors (for example, Kroskrity, 2004; Makoni and Meinhof, 2006/2013; Blommaert, 2006; Makoni and Pennycook, 2007) to illustrate the ways in which linguistic ideologies mediate the discursive construction of languages.

Blommaert (2006: 516) writes about “the ideological drive behind language change”, and Irvine and Gal (2000) actually specify three semiotic processes through which language users and experts construct linguistic ideologies in relation to linguistic varieties or language change. These semiotic processes are iconization, fractal recursivity and erasure. Iconization takes into account particular linguistic signs or features which index certain social groups and which are then considered as iconizing this group’s essence. Iconization is particularly common among linguistic minority groups in Europe,

such as Basque, Catalan and Welsh speakers. In this connection, Kroskrity (2000) points out how nationalist ideologies may prefigure particular language speakers' use of language and performances of identities without relying on analyses derived from empirical sociolinguistic data (see Pinto, this volume, in relation to linguistic ideologies which operate on the basis of the identity prefiguration of 'Brazilian Portuguese' speakers).

Fractal recursivity refers to "the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level" (Irvine and Gal, 2000: 38), on different scales, for instance. An opposition which accounts for differences within the same group may also be expanded to delineate differences across groups. One of the examples which Irvine and Gal (2000) provide relates to how the use of clicks in Khoi languages penetrated Nguni languages to create lexical substitutions, with the objective of avoiding certain lexical items and of showing respect for the interlocutor.

Erasure is the process of sociolinguistic simplification to which speakers or linguists make recourse so that their model of the language fits in with their language ideology. By so doing, they erase people and sociolinguistic variation, creating a homogeneous or essentialist view of a language or of a social group. Such semiotic processes of linguistic ideology construction by both speakers and linguists often involve the construction/description of grammars, of lexis/dictionaries and of interactional and discursive patterns. They are processes that are informed by linguistic ideologies, which can also slip into discriminatory ideologies of a classist, racist, sexist, nationalist or colonialist nature (see Patel and Cavalcanti; da Silva, this volume), among others.

The fifth and last dimension of linguistic ideologies to which Kroskrity (2004) refers has to do with their use in the construction of sociocultural identities such as nationality, ethnicity etc. Language sharing has been used to unite and divide social groups, constructing differences of several kinds among groups, making such differences 'natural' and favouring the creation of the nation-state to the point of often annihilating or erasing other languages or varieties (see the chapters by Carneiro and by Patel and Cavalcanti, in this volume, about the relationship between linguistic ideologies and the creation of the independent nation-states of East-Timor and Mozambique, respectively).

For example, the common-sense linguistic ideology that Brazil is a monolingual country is long established. Portuguese is discursively constructed as the national language and as a language with very clear-cut boundaries. At the same time, the existence of approximately 274 Brazilian Indian languages is erased (see Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics Census, 2010—[censo2010ibge.gov.br](http://censo2010.ibge.gov.br)), along with the users of many other languages, such as Brazilian sign language (LIBRAS); border languages such as Spanish, Guarani,⁹ French, English and Dutch; and the numerous languages of immigrants, such as Arabic, German, Japanese, Italian, Ukrainian, Mandarin and Korean (see Oliveira, this volume). In addition, there is the current use of