THE COMMODIFICATION OF ENGLISH IN BRAZILIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES: LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES ENTEXTUALIZED IN THE SCOPE OF THE PROGRAM *ENGLISH WITHOUT BORDERS*

A COMODIFICAÇÃO DO INGLÊS EM UNIVERSIDADES PÚBLICAS BRASILEIRAS: IDEOLOGIAS LINGUÍSTICAS ENTEXTUALIZADAS NO ÂMBITO DO PROGRAMA *INGLÊS SEM FRONTEIRAS*

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ABSTRACT: In line with the dialogues that Brazilian applied linguists have established with the fields of sociolinguistics of globalization (BLOMMAERT, 2010) and language ideologies (WOOLARD, 1998; KROSKRITY, 2004) this paper focuses on the language ideologies entextualized in the scope of the program *English Without Borders*. Parting from the assumption that language faculties in Brazilian public universities have become markets in which English stands as a strategic commodity for students' mobility in the scope of internationalization policies, discourses about English as the lingua franca for transnational mobility become arenas in which ideologies related to mobility, globalization and nativeness are (re)signified. Taking the program *Languages Without Borders* and, within it, *English Without Borders,* as one of these markets, I look into pieces of institutional discourses about the program to problematize the monolingual native-based language ideology and the colonial view of globalization entextualized in these discourses.
KEYWORDS: English. Language ideologies. Mobility. Globalization. Nativeness

RESUMO: Em sintonia com os diálogos que linguistas aplicados brasileiros têm estabelecido com os campos da sociolinguística da globalização (BLOMMAERT, 2010) e de ideologias linguísticas (WOOLARD, 1998; KROSKRITY, 2004), o presente artigo foca nas ideologias linguísticas entextualizadas no âmbito do programa *Inglês sem Fronteiras*. Partindo do princípio que os cursos de Letras das Universidades Públicas brasileiras se tornaram mercados onde o inglês figura como um bem de consumo estratégico para a mobilidade de alunos no escopo de políticas de internacionalização, os discursos sobre inglês como língua franca para a mobilidade transnacional tornam-se arenas em que ideologias relacionadas à mobilidade, globalização e falante nativo são (re)significadas. Considerando o programa *Idiomas sem Fronteiras* e, como parte deste, o *Inglês sem Fronteiras*, como um desses mercados, recortes de discursos institucionais acerca desse programa são analisados a fim de se problematizar a ideologia linguística monolíngue baseada na noção de falante nativo assim como a perspectiva colonial de globalização entextualizadas nesses discursos.
PALAVRAS-CHAVES: Inglês. Ideologias linguísticas. Mobilidade. Globalização

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1 INTRODUCTION

Drawing on metaphors associated with capitalism, Bordieu (1991 [1982]) emphasizes how the language that comes to be legitimated as the standard one represents a high valued symbolic capital. Such capital plays a fundamental role in the creation of markets that somehow restrict the production, consumption and circulation of cultural goods. Although the recognition of the standard language legitimacy is constructed in multilayered ways by several social institutions, the author highlights that for being the custodian of what counts as legitimate culture, the educational market represents a strategic device to sustain the symbolic capital of standard language and its products.

If, on one hand, it is still true that the educational sphere remains a central gatekeeper of what counts as legitimate language and literacies and, thus, go on exercising symbolic violence (BORDIEU, 1991 [1982]) upon those who do not master the valued linguistic resources, on the other, the unprecedented mobility in the flux of people and texts experienced in the contemporary world introduces more challenges to this gatekeeping process and contributes to change the strategies through which it is exercised. From the standpoint of the sociolinguistics of globalization (BLOOMAERT, 2005, 2010), the fact that linguistic resources are transformed and prone to distinct (e)valuations as people move across both physical and virtual borders constitutes a means of great disturbance in the efforts of maintaining the unified linguistic markets that have traditionally been defined within national borders.

As the lingua franca of globalization and, as such, a tool for (i)mobility, English has become an invaluable commodity of our times. Thus, "it seems natural that its roles in the contemporary world and the pedagogies through which it is taught/learned become arenas of competing language ideologies" (SZUNDY, in press). Across these arenas, scholars' ideologies in relation to this commodity range from stances that emphasize the imperial character of English and its threats to multilingualism (PHILLIPSON, 2001; RAPATAHANA, BUNCE et al, 2012) to those whose focuses lie on how the language is creatively resignified as it spreads across borders to become both a lingua franca among speakers of different lingua cultures (HOUSE, 20003; JENKINS, 2007; LEFFA, 2002; RAJAGOPALAN, 2004; SEIDLHOFER, 2011, among others) and one of the resources in transidiomatic practices (BLOMMAERT, 2013; JACQUEMET, 2005; MOITA LOPES, 2008).

Despite the growing research on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and transidiomatic practices within the fields of applied language studies, gatekeeping efforts to maintain mainstream native English standard varieties, mainly the American and British ones, as yardsticks of academic and professional mobility remain vigorous within educational markets. While publishers, testing institutions and universities may figure as the most obvious guardians of these very lucrative markets, processes of (de/re)contextualization of discourses in which English is (re)signified as an important commodity for academic mobility make language ideologies about what counts as (standard) English more opaque or, according to Bloomaert (2010), more multilayered and polycentric.

Having in mind this multilayered and polycentric nature of language ideologies, this paper aims at drawing a reflection on language ideologies entextualized in the scope of the program *English Without Borders*. The analysis of the institutional site of the program and of online pieces of news connected to it is oriented by the notion that discourses are constantly made into new ones through entextualization processes in which these discourses are (de/re)contextualized (SILVERSTEIN and URBAN, 1996)[2], by the analytical toolkit (re)designed for the sociolinguistics of globalization (BLOMMAERT, 2005, 2010) and by conceptions of language ideologies (WOOLARD, 1998; KROSKRITY, 2004).

The language ideologies entextualized in discursive practices about the program *Languages and English Without Borders* constitute the object of reflection in the two next sections: 2. *Languages and English within borders*: which are the legitimized linguistic borders? 3. Native speakers as an additional commodity to the English market in the program *English Without Borders*. In the final remarks, I outline some of the implications as well as the limitations of the concepts mobilized in my analysis to (re)think current research on ELT in the scope of Applied Linguistics.

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[2] Blommaert (2005) defines entextualization as "the process by means of which discourse is successively decontextualized and recontextualized, and thus made into a 'new' discourse" (p.250-251).

2 LANGUAGES AND ENGLISH WITHIN BORDERS: WHICH ARE THE LEGITIMIZED LINGUISTIC BORDERS?

The program *English Without Borders* was created by the Brazilian Ministry of Education and CAPES[3] in 2012 as part of a wider mobility policy called *Science Without Border*s. Initially, the program was restricted to the application of the proficiency test TOEFL-ITP[4] to candidates enrolled in *Science Without Borders,* but in 2013 the application of this exam was extended to include teachers of English at public schools, public university staff as well as undergraduate and graduate students, whether or not they were eligible to take part in *Science Without Borders*. In the end of 2013, the public universities initially accredited as TOEFL-ITP application centers started to offer face-to-face English courses aimed mainly at preparing undergraduate and postgraduate students to get the required score in TOEFL and IELTS[5] to take part in exchange programs in the scope of *Science Without Borders* in overseas universities where English was either the first language or the medium of instruction. In November of 2014, the program was renamed *Languages Without Borders* and started to include both *English Without Borders* and *French Without Borders*[6].

After this brief description, I refer to the idea of language ideologies as "beliefs, or feelings about languages as used in their social worlds" (KROSKRITY, 2004, p.498), and as "representations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world" (WOOLARD, 1998, p.3) to reflect about the meanings of *borders* entextualized in the program *Languages Without Borders* and in *English Without Borders* as one of its branches. The prepositional phrase *without borders* used to modify the noun *languages* and the adjectives *French* and *English* projected into the macro context of internationalization policies such as *Science Without Borders* instantiate ideologies concerning language and globalization that, contrary to the intended linguistic effect, inscribe the programs into limited linguistic borders.

While in the definition of the internationalization policy *Science Without Border*, the prepositional phrase *without border* seems to express a relatively wider view of mobility in which "the best students and researchers will undertake research in the best and most relevant Universities around the World"[7], the fact that the language programs as well as the online courses in service of this mobility are restricted to English and French in the institutional site of *Languages Without Borders* indicates that these two languages enjoy more prestige in the scientific market envisaged in this internationalization policy. The restriction of language teaching and testing policies to these languages also depicts a view of globalization processes working from the center to the periphery, in which researchers from the less developed south learn from the *most relevant* Anglophone and Francophone institutions in Europe and North-America.

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[3] Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior, a foundation related to the Ministry of Education.

[4] Test of English as a Foreign Language-Institutional Testing Program is a paper-based test that uses academic content to evaluate the proficiency of non-native speakers of English. Source: https://www.ets.org/toefl_itp/content. Access: November 30th, 2015.
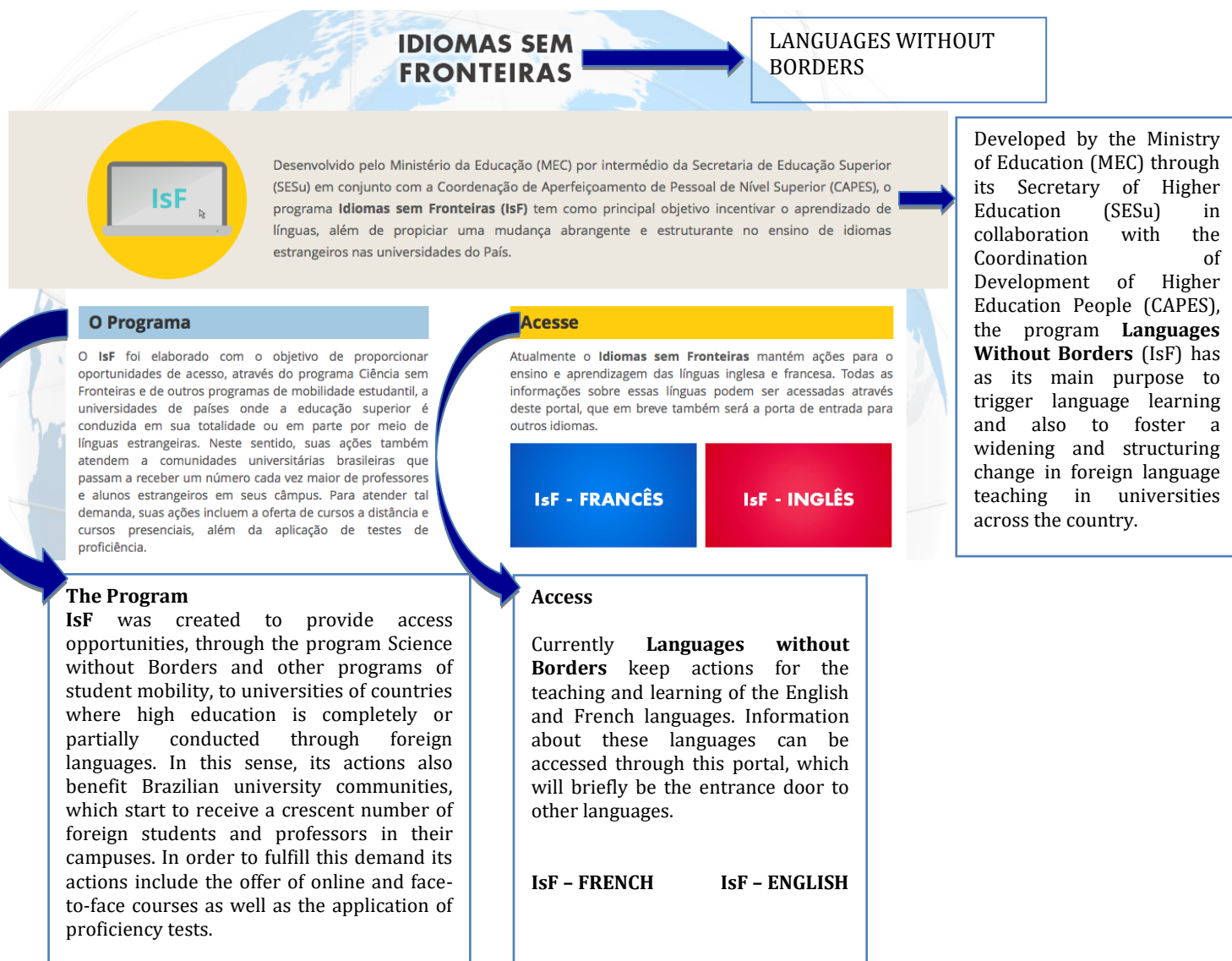
[5] The International English Testing System, developed by the British Council , is the most required proficiency exam in the UK higher education institutions.

[6] Source: http://isf.mec.gov.br/ingles/pt-br/historico. Access: November 30th, 2015.

[7] Source: http://www.cienciasemfronteiras.gov.br/web/csf-eng/. Access: November 30th, 2015.

The idea that English and French resources, comprehended as the "concrete accents, language varieties, registers, modalities" (BLOMMAERT, 2010, p. 102), enjoy greater status than those of other languages within the program *Languages Without Borders*[8] is confirmed in the initial page of the program website.

Figure 1 - Initial page of the Program *Languages Without Borders*.[9]

IDIOMAS SEM FRONTEIRAS → LANGUAGES WITHOUT BORDERS

Desenvolvido pelo Ministério da Educação (MEC) por intermédio da Secretaria de Educação Superior (SESu) em conjunto com a Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES), o programa **Idiomas sem Fronteiras (IsF)** tem como principal objetivo incentivar o aprendizado de línguas, além de propiciar uma mudança abrangente e estruturante no ensino de idiomas estrangeiros nas universidades do País.

→ Developed by the Ministry of Education (MEC) through its Secretary of Higher Education (SESu) in collaboration with the Coordination of Development of Higher Education People (CAPES), the program **Languages Without Borders** (IsF) has as its main purpose to trigger language learning and also to foster a widening and structuring change in foreign language teaching in universities across the country.

O Programa

O **IsF** foi elaborado com o objetivo de proporcionar oportunidades de acesso, através do programa Ciência sem Fronteiras e de outros programas de mobilidade estudantil, a universidades de países onde a educação superior é conduzida em sua totalidade ou em parte por meio de línguas estrangeiras. Neste sentido, suas ações também atendem a comunidades universitárias brasileiras que passam a receber um número cada vez maior de professores e alunos estrangeiros em seus câmpus. Para atender tal demanda, suas ações incluem a oferta de cursos a distância e cursos presenciais, além da aplicação de testes de proficiência.

Acesse

Atualmente o **Idiomas sem Fronteiras** mantém ações para o ensino e aprendizagem das línguas inglesa e francesa. Todas as informações sobre essas línguas podem ser acessadas através deste portal, que em breve também será a porta de entrada para outros idiomas.

IsF - FRANCÊS **IsF - INGLÊS**

The Program

IsF was created to provide access opportunities, through the program Science without Borders and other programs of student mobility, to universities of countries where high education is completely or partially conducted through foreign languages. In this sense, its actions also benefit Brazilian university communities, which start to receive a crescent number of foreign students and professors in their campuses. In order to fulfill this demand its actions include the offer of online and face-to-face courses as well as the application of proficiency tests.

Access

Currently **Languages without Borders** keep actions for the teaching and learning of the English and French languages. Information about these languages can be accessed through this portal, which will briefly be the entrance door to other languages.

IsF – FRENCH   **IsF – ENGLISH**

In the figure above the image of the globe is used as the background for the text that provides general information about *Languages Without* Borders. In addition to naming the institutions that developed the program, the text in the first plan states its main purposes as *to trigger language learning and also to foster a widening and structuring change in foreign language teaching in universities across the country*. The

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[8] Although face-to-face and online courses of other languages can be designed and offered individually by the universities affiliated to the program *Languages Without Borders*, only English and French are included in the wider national policy or language teaching-learning and testing.

[9] Source: http://isf.mec.gov.br. Access: December 06th, 2015.

box on the left titled *The Program* establishes the access of Brazilian students and scholars to overseas universities through mobility programs such as *Science Without Borders* as another objective of *Language Without* Borders. Besides, it also describes the actions of the program: *the offer of online and face-to-face courses as well as the application of proficiency tests*. Finally, the box on the right, titled *Access*, gives access to the programs *French Without Borders* and *English Without Borders*.

Although the use of the globe as a background and of the plural *languages* and *foreign languages* to express the objectives of *Languages Without Borders* may suggest an orientation towards a multilingual policy, the restriction of the program to French and English points to the fact that these are the languages that enjoy the highest indexical value in the promotion of students' mobility from the periphery to the center. However, the fact that both French and English are included in the three main actions of the program doesn't mean that they enjoy the same prestige within it. As the lingua franca spoken by an average of two billion people around the world, English is a lucrative and coveted symbolic capital of our times. Thus, its geopolitics (LACOSTE, RAJAGOPALAN et al, 2004) turns English into a key resource in internationalization policies such as *Science Without Borders*.

Not only the prioritization of English and French and of English over French locates the program within clear linguistic and geographical borders, the partnership with mainly North-American institutions and the implicit value posed in so-called native speakers place it within language ideologies that have been highly problematized in much of the current research in the applied fields of language studies. This problematization is outlined in the next section.

3 NATIVE SPEAKERS AS AN ADDITIONAL COMMODITY TO THE ENGLISH MARKET IN THE PROGRAM *ENGLISH WITOUT BORDERS*

The modernist conception of language based on an ideal monolingual native speaker has been regarded as problematic for denying conflicting ideologies engendered in binarisms related to gender, sexuality, race, nativeness, (non)standard language, among others; for ignoring, therefore, that the language subject is not an anonymous being, but a sexually, aged and gender situated subject (MOITA LOPES, 2010). Bauman and Briggs (1990) similarly problematize theorizations framed in terms of the native model because "they tend also to ignore the fact that such factors as gender and social class frequently generate competing perspectives on language and social life" (p.3). Alternatively, many scholars who criticize the so called "native theories" advocate approaches that take into consideration the performative, multisituated and multisemiotic nature of language, focusing on the processes of (re)circulation and (re)distribution of semiotic resources and on their (trans)local impacts.

Criticism concerning native-speaker based theories is also found in research related to the spread of English as a lingua franca. In general, these studies claim the possession and transformation of resources related to what we call English to all those who use it (LEFFA, 2002; RAJAGOPALAN, 2004; MOITA LOPES, 2008) as "a space for contestation, for claiming the periphery rights, for subversion and not submission"

(RAJAGOPALAN, 2004, p.155)[10]. Acknowledging the necessity of any speaker to be plurilingual in his/her first and/or additional languages, Leung (2013) argues for a revisited notion of communicative competence so as to widen the scope of the "social" in English teaching. For Leung, only a reconfigured notion of communicative competence can shed light to meaning (de/re)construction processes in which people engage in a contemporaneity marked by the superdiversity of communities (VERTOVEC, 2007). Based on the analysis of the European Framework of Reference for Languages descriptors and of activities that integrate ELT textbooks designed for the worldwide market, Leung (2013) describes how Hymes' original concept of communicative competence is distorted to construct highly stabilized social dimensions of English uses modeled on an idealized native speaker, often portrayed as someone belonging to "middle-class, speaking Standard English, and from the (relatively) affluent (Global) North" (LEUNG, 2013, p.305).

Being a very important current reference in language teaching and testing, the European Framework of Reference plays a fundamental role in the definition of linguistic competence and highly influences language teaching and learning processes, including those envisaged in programs aimed at students' international mobility. As the following two figures portray, the same focus on an idealized native speaker pointed by Leung (2013) is entextualized in the descriptions of the courses offered in the program *English Without Borders*.

Figure 2 - Description of the online course *My English Online (MEO)*

Figure 3 - Description of face-to-face courses offered by accredited Brazilian public universities[11]

Although the expression "native speaker" is not used in the short description of the course *My English Online (MEO)*, the "global" educational companies that were hired to design *MEO – National Geographic Learning in partnership with Cengage Learning* – points to the Brazilian Ministry of Education (MEC) belief that entrepreneurs from "the (relatively) affluent (Global) North" (LEUNG, 2013, p.305) are the ones entitled to offer the *solutions* in ELT that the Brazilian academic community needs for international mobility and/or the internationalization of public universities. Given the fact that the local academic expertise on digital literacies and online education, which, besides numerous, is mainly financed with public resources, doesn't seem to have been considered to design *MEO*, the same ideology of mobility from the

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[11] Source: http://isf.mec.gov.br/ingles/pt-br/curso-presencial. Access: December 06, 2015

center (developed north) to the periphery (less developed south) can be viewed here. A look at how language ideologies are recontextualized by the contractors MEC hired to develop *MEO* reveals a marketization of educational discourse aimed to sell their products to a global market. Such a process can be seen in the hybridization of business and academic jargon depicted in statements such as: *In Cengage Learning we understand and improve the way the world learns English* and *We develop innovative solution to language teaching-learning for all ages and educational sectors.* As their *number one priority is offering worldwide academic solution and services that help people reach success in their personal and professional lives[12],* English is marketized as the symbolic capital that will allow their *clients* to experience the (North) American dream and the wonders of globalization.

Figure 3 provides a considerably longer description of the face-to-face courses offered by the 63 accredited universities than that of *MEO* in figure 2. Differently from the online course whose focus is described as the *development* of *reading, oral comprehension* and *grammar skills*, the objectives of face-to-face courses emphasize the *development of oral and written communication, the knowledge of academic cultures of countries where English is used in higher education as well as the student-student and teacher-student interactions*. Given the fact that the academic expertise in ELT, mainly represented by academics developing and supervising research in the field of Applied Linguistics, has been crucial in producing these courses, the lexical choice chosen to describe their purposes indexes language ideologies more oriented towards a sociocultural rather than cognitive view of language: *oral and written communication* (figure 3) instead of *skills* (figure 2). Moreover, aligned with a purview of inter/multicultural teacher education, the objective of providing *knowledge of academic cultures* is also included in face-to-face courses.

The fact that these courses are taught by undergraduate students also indicates the preoccupation of the academic community engaged in their design with making them into settings for pre-service teacher education. Nevertheless, despite their more academic than business-oriented linguistic ideologies, the multicultural experience in which students may engage seem to be provided by the *presence of North-Americans (English Teaching Assistant-ETA) from different regions of the United States*. Similarly to the partnerships established for the development of *MEO*, the one between CAPES and Fulbright also places nativeness as a central commodity in face-to-face courses. Whereas the only piece of information about the undergraduate students who do the teaching work is that they are *qualified with professional excellence in the language*, native speakers are portrayed as the ones who provide unique cultural experiences through the *active participation of ETAs in the activities of face-to-face courses* and the possibility of *immersion in the culture of English native speakers* that such a participation provides.

Despite being assistants and, as so, not entitled to take classes on their own in the program *English Without Borders*, in a piece of news published on the CAPES website in February 2014 on the occasion of the reception of 90 ETAs in Brasília[13], the ETAs are elevated to the category of teachers, as already indicated in the headlines: *Teachers who will teach students of English Without Borders are welcomed at CAPES.*

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[12] Source: http://www.cengage.com.br/solucoes-para-aprendizado-de-ingles/. Access: December 04th, 2015.

[13] Source: http://www.capes.gov.br/36-noticias/6752-professores-que-darao-aulas-para-alunos-do-ingles-sem-fronteiras-sao-recepcionados-na-capes. Access: December 05th, 2015

Throughout the news their native English is portrayed as the authoritative and authentic one to foster the necessary proficiency in English. Such portray is constructed mainly through the use of cited discourses (VOLOSHINOV, 1999 [1929]), commonly called in news to entextualize the voices of distinctive institutional authorities. The authoritative voices which are used to strengthen the ideal of nativeness include those of: the representative of the Fulbright Program – *[...][he] participated of the opening ceremony **emphasizing the role of ETAs in the worldwide expansion of English*; the president of the Program *English Without Borders* – *"You are a great part of this program. You are our partners, our friends, and I hope you help us **accomplish our goal to improve the proficiency of our students"*;* the director of International Relations at CAPES – *"We want our students to speak English the quickest as possible and that you **not only transmit your experiences to our students, but also to our teachers"***.

The brief analysis of language ideologies entextualized in institutional discourses about the program *Languages Without Borders* and, within it, *English Without Borders* shows that Native Standard North-American English is the variety that stands as the most legitimate one and the yardstick to develop the required proficiency to promote Brazilian students' international mobility. In addition to ignoring the fact that (inter)competences across different academic practices are not granted by birth (RAJAGOPALAN, 2004), the high currency attributed to nativeness contributes to silence the three times more numerous voices of other linguacultures speakers who creatively use English as a border language (MOITA LOPES, 2008) in ever more frequent transidiomatic practices (JACQUEMET, 2014). In silencing such voices, the views about mobility and globalization (de/re)contextualized in these discourses keep tied to the territorialized epistemology of national language that characterizes the monolingual modernist language ideology based on the "one nation, one language" logic. Additionally, for ignoring alternative performances with the many Englishes used away from the global north, the language ideologies revoiced in the institutional discourses problematized in this paper also echo a colonial perspective of globalization.

FINAL REMARKS

While a considerable part of the ideologies that orient research in ELT remain attached to what Pennycook (2006) defines as the hypocrisies of a traditional perspective of Applied Linguistics [14], the analytical toolkit (re)designed by the sociolinguistic of globalization and by a transgressive view of Applied Linguistics [15] (PENNYCOOK, 2006) can offer meta-reflexive material to challenge some of these hypocrisies, a fundamental process to change the landscapes in ELT so as to make it more responsive to and aware of the uses and abuses of semiotic resources related to what we call English in contemporaneity. Among others, two fundamental epistemological shifts that can contribute to make ELT research less hypocritical lie in

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[14] These hypocrisies include: omission and relativism in issues related to racism, sexism, poverty and homophobia; assumption of cultural and political neutrality; denial of alternative worldviews and the inability to deal with linguistic changes in social sciences due to the dependency of this view on theoretical Linguistics (PENNYCOOK, 2006).

[15] Transgression is understood as way "to think what shouldn't be thought, do what shouldn't be done" (PENNYCOOK, 2006, p.74).

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the (re)configuration of what is commonly understood as context and language in the field.

The notion of context as a nonreadable surround whose existence is independent from texts (Silverstein and Urban, 1996) seem to be a well accommodated one in ELT. Such stance towards context is depicted in the many studies that take the classroom as the fixed setting where learning practices mediated by language take place. The understanding of entextualization as "the process by means of which discourse is successively decontextualized and recontextualized, and thus made into a 'new' discourse" (BLOMMAERT, 2005, p.251-252) transforms contexts into movable settings that are constantly (de/re)constructed as semiotic resources move and gain distinct (d)evaluations across these settings.

Since in this view contexts don't have an existence prior to language, but are constructed by multiple semiotic resources of which what we come to identify as languages such as English, French, Portuguese, Spanish etc. are but one of the possible resources, the reconfiguration of the notion of context calls for a shift in the concept of language. Abandoning the modernist idea of language based on a native model, reified notions of language are re-focused "to a new kind of unit: an ideologically configured and indexically ordered set of specific linguistic-semiotic resources" that is developed "in the course of people's social life, and deployed in highly context-sensitive metalinguistically regimented social practices" (BLOMMAERT, 2014, p.3).

The shift to a moveable comprehension of context and of "linguistic-semiotic resources" in ELT can foster a more problematizing view towards endeared binary distinctions such as native x non-native speaker, Bristish x American English, standard x non-standard English, basic x intermediate x advanced levels etc., which may lead to (future) teachers greater awareness about how such binarisms compete in markets where distinct concepts of English represent equally distinct symbolic capitals. Being entrenched even in the many discourses that challenge them as, for example, in those related to the field of English as a Lingua Franca, the main limitation seems to remain one of linguistic-semiotic nature, and the search for further metaphors and images (Blommaert, 2014) that will allow the implosion of such binarisms is yet to be made.

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