

**Discursive resignification in different contexts:  
popular linguistics and ludolinguistics**

***Ressignificação discursiva em diferentes contextos:  
linguística popular e ludolinguistas***

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**Abstract:** In this paper, at first, with some vagueness, we present the reflections of Marie-Anne Paveau (2019a, 2019b, 2020) on the issue of discursive resignification. Then, we tested this proposal on different data that Marie-Anne Paveau mobilized. It is a small set of texts that re-signify, on the one hand, the whitening of Machado de Assis and, on the other, some of Jair Bolsonaro's insulting speeches given to different social actors. Finally, based on the category of ludolinguist, proposed by Paveau (2008, 2018, 2020) and, based on a set of data, which make Jair Bolsonaro's disastrous performance in the face of the Amazon and Pantanal fires, as well as its ineffective performance in relation to the price control of some products, metonymically represented by the designations *Bolsonero* and *Bolsocaro*, we propose the category of humorous resignification. Based on the analysis, we understand that discursive resignification, especially humorous, can become an important tool to combat hate speech, which currently circulates in our society and which crystallize the most varied power relations.

**Keywords:** Discourse; Resignification; Popular Linguistics

**Resumo:** Neste artigo, num primeiro momento, com certo vagar, apresentamos as reflexões de Marie-Anne Paveau (2019a, 2019b, 2020) sobre a questão da resignificação discursiva. Na sequência, testamos essa proposta em dados distintos dos quais Marie-Anne Paveau mobilizou. Trata-se de um pequeno conjunto de textos que resignificam por um lado o branqueamento de Machado de Assis e, por outro, algumas das falas insultuosas de Jair Bolsonaro desferidas a distintos atores sociais. Por último, a partir da



categoria de ludolinguista, proposta por Paveau (2008, 2018, 2020) e, com base num conjunto de dados, que tornam em derrisão a atuação desastrosa de Jair Bolsonaro frente às queimadas da Amazônia e do Pantanal, bem como a sua atuação pouco eficaz frente ao controle de preços de alguns produtos, representados metonimicamente pelas designações *Bolsonero* e *Bolsocaro*, propomos a categoria de ressignificação humorística. Entendemos com base nas análises que a ressignificação discursiva, especialmente a humorística, pode se tornar numa importante ferramenta de combate aos discursos de ódio, que circulam atualmente na nossa sociedade e que cristalizam as mais variadas relações de poder.

**Palavras-chave:** Discurso; Ressignificação; Linguística Popular

## 1 Introduction: notes about violence and resignification

The development of the media, especially the internet, directly influences our lives in a broad sense; insofar it promotes new ways of disseminating information, reconfigures both the interaction and the way to express opinions, beliefs and point of views. As a space of high diffusion and greater openness, aligned with the horizontalization of communication, we also see the internet as space where the various aspects of violence can also be intensified.

Despite engendering various modes of discourse management, the internet is configured as a potential space of expression and enables the union and mobilization of the various discursive communities in an unrestricted manner. The themes are debated and circulated from discursive places less and less marked by the hierarchy of social and political relations.

Social networks, especially, propagate and irradiate information through various processes, from likes (for publications on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube, for example), the forwarding of messages on WhatsApp, to the various possibilities of sharing (with comments, simple reposting, retweeting etc.). They propagate important and relevant points of view, but they are also vectors of misinformation and many kinds of cyber violence.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> About cyber violence seen from a discursive perspective, see Paveau (2017) entry “discursive cyber violence”.

Discursive cyber violence is broadly defined as cyber violence exercised through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), that is, “any and all kinds of technology that handles information and aids communication, and may be in the form of hardware, software, network or cell phones in general” (ISI-TICS, 2019, § 2).<sup>2</sup> As Paveau (2017, p. 84) states, cyber violence can be understood as an “attack to somebody, humiliation and the transgression of decency values”.

Our focus, however, in this text is not only to address cyber violence itself, but especially the possibility of response that the attacked subjects find through digital mechanisms. In the same spaces, the social medias, they re-signify the aggressions, defend their points of view and clarify society about which is the discourse aligned to the true value, since besides being targets, they are the subjects directly implicated and, therefore, the most apt to undo the defamations by explaining the context.

All ways of stigmatization can receive an answer; among them, the resignification allows a stigmatized unit (person, group or category or even football team) to respond from the content of the stigmatizing direction. In its discursive dimension, this process consists of retaking a language element that is felt as offensive and/or insulting and modifying the negative axiological value, in order to transform it into a brand of empathizing identity.

Examples well known as *drag*, *queer*, *slut* or *whore*, used in a militant context as lexical elements with confidence, are derived from this process; negative values are reappropriated by the speakers and metabolized into identity markers identity. This process is one of the strategies to fight oppression linked to gender, sex or race in contemporary movements, a tactic described and theorized in Philosophy by Judith Butler, in 1997, in the book *Excitable Speech. A politics of the performative*, and mentioned a few years earlier by Donna Haraway in the *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1991) using an animal analogy: as well as salamanders repair their wounds by promoting the growth of new members, injured people have the option, from and in place of their wound (these linguistic markers are essential), to produce a refreshing speech, restorative and rehabilitation.

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<sup>2</sup> We freely made all translations of the quoted excerpts. Eventually we kept it in the original language.

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## 2 Theoretical foundation: discursive resignification as proposed by Marie-Anne Paveau

Marie-Anne Paveau (2019a, 2019b, 2020) proposes the concept of resignification from a discursive perspective anchored in a typology of these technodiscursive practices, that is, briefly, discourses that are linked to the internet to be produced. This typology is based on three categories: (i) enunciative recontextualization, when an insulting statement is resumed, generating a new meaning in its place; (ii) analogical publication, when the insulting statement is resumed engendering in its place a reframing that starts to circulate in different contexts from which it initially circulated; and (iii) the production of a cultural or intellectual device, when the insulting statement is resumed engendering in its place a reframing that starts to circulate in different contexts from which it initially circulated and that reframing becomes a cultural and intellectual device of resistance. In this sense, the author proposes a

theorization of resignification, in order to convert it into an operative notion for discourse analysis, in the wake of Butler, from Brontsema's work, previous research on the notion (Paveau 2013a, 2017a, 2017b, 2019) and also integrating Kunert's perspective. This theorization goes beyond the practice of reappropriating designations of people and separates itself from the lexical or categorical approach often presented to exemplify resignification. It opens up to other discursive practices and tactics, allowed by the digital discursive universes, but not only by them, involving not only designatives, but also discourses, signs, images, sound. Resignification is not, therefore, just a semantic-pragmatic process, but a total discursive device, which involves varied and plurisemiotic discursive forms [which offended subjects use to respond to their offenders] (Paveau, 2019b, p. 121-122, our translation).

Resignification by enunciative recontextualization is understood by Marie-Anne Paveau as the most common resignification practice. From a linguistic point of view, she argues that “it is about the repetition of words, statements or signs in the form of the origin, in different contexts from a different enunciative source, as it is related to the offended person” (Paveau, 2019a, p. 128, our translation), asserting that “it is the discursive circulation that produces the resignification” (Paveau, 2019a, p. 128, our translation). The researcher also notes that recontextualization takes place from the dominant semiotic code (written, oral, imagery and sound), even if they are plurisemiotic

productions. In this way, she lists three possibilities of recontextualization: simple republication; republication as a meaningful comment and enunciative resumption.

With regard to the iconic dominant form, Paveau presents a possibility: the publication of *selfies*, which include both the offended and the offender. With regard to plurisemiotic forms in the oral dominant, two possibilities are proposed: the reading aloud of the offensive comments and the singing of the offensive comments. Already about analog publishing – understood as “the networking of a technodiscursive production analogous to that of the attack” (Paveau, 2019b, p. 134, our translation) –, the author cites two possibilities: the analog publication of still images and the analog publication of moving images (video). Finally, she understands the resignification by producing a cultural or intellectual device as a set of resignificant responses related to the construction of cultural or intellectual technodiscursive devices, where “the battered subjects produce meaningful statements based on their technical skills, related to their professional field, media and human sciences” (Paveau, 2019b, p. 135, our translation). For this type of resignification, there are, in the author's understanding, three possibilities: media creation; the iconic-discursive-financial device and the production of scientific knowledge.

To analyze the resignification in digital contexts, from the three proposed typologies, the French researcher also proposes seven (techno)-linguistic discursive criteria, which, according to her, constitute resignification as a discursive process:

1. pragmatic criterion: there is a language wound caused by insult, stigmatization, attack, etc. regarding the identity of a person or group;
2. interactional criterion: a response to the offensive statement is produced;
3. enunciative criterion: the attacked subject is the enunciative origin of the response, which he takes up from the offensive statement on his own as self-categorization, or it causes a simple recontextualization;
4. semantic-axiological criterion: the response statement comprises a semantic and / or axiological inversion or change;
5. discursive criterion: the response statement is produced in a different context from the offensive statement, which is recontextualized by “openness to unknown contexts” (Butler, 2005, p. 234);
6. socio-semantic criterion: the recontextualized use of the language element is judged as acceptable and recognized as such by the subjects involved, who form a collective subject;
7. pragmatic-political criterion: the resignified statement is revolutionary, as it produces reparation and resistance, expanding the cohesion of the militant subject (Kunert, 2010) (Paveau, 2019b, p. 122, our translation).

A good example of the fertility of the theory of resignification, understood here as a technodiscursive practice and at the same time a discursive fact, comes from a

campaign created by the movement #MachadodeAssisReal, which aims to repair a racial injustice, which is until today, as elsewhere, publishers portray Machado de Assis as if he were white. This movement also created a virtual petition on the Change.org<sup>3</sup> platform asking for the whitened images of the Brazilian writer to be replaced. At the moment, the petition has more than 14686<sup>4</sup> signatures and the goal of the organizers is to reach 15000. Below (Image 1) we can see a screenshot of the page, in which the pictures of white and black Machado de Assis were placed side by side:

**Image 1** - Photographs of Machado de Assis, which show how he was whitened by Brazilian publishers.



Source: <https://catracalivre.com.br/causando/acao-corrige-erro-historico-com-imagem-de-machado-de-assis-negro/>

The #MachadodeAssisReal movement created in April 2019 is the result of a partnership between *Zumbi dos Palmares Faculty* and Gray Brasil agency, with the support of organizations such as *Quilombhoje*, to encourage the literature of black authors. For movement organizers:

More than just correcting the past, we want this racial absurdity to stop being perpetuated in Brazilian literature. Therefore, we created this petition so that

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<sup>3</sup> Available at: <https://www.change.org/p/editoras-substituir-nos-livros-a-foto-de-machado-de-assis-embranquecido-pela-real>.

<sup>4</sup> Checked in 04/09/2021.

publishers and bookstores stop printing, publishing and marketing books in which the writer appears whitened and substitutes the prejudiced image with the photo by the real Machado de Assis (our translation).

As we said, this is a good example of resignification. In this example, we have the 7 criteria, proposed by (Paveau, 2019a, 2019b, 2020) working:

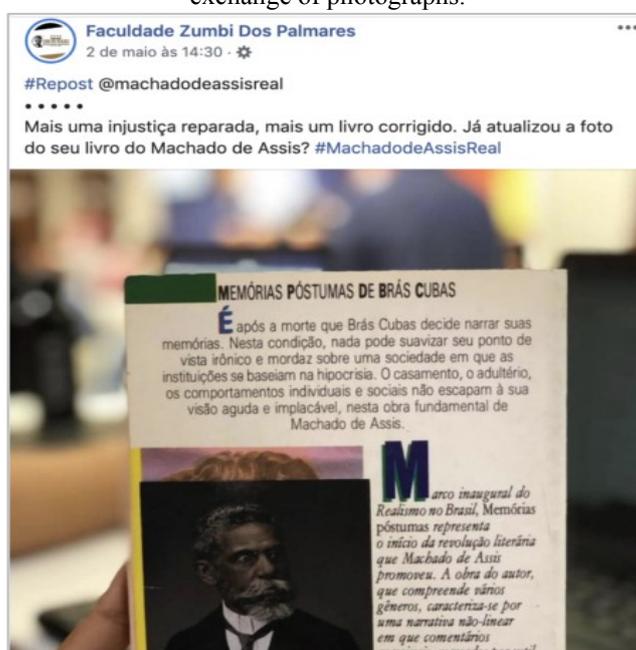
- 1. pragmatic criterion:** a group of institutional actors, among them- *Zumbi dos Palmares Faculty*, considers the whitened photographs, which circulate in the works of and about Machado de Assis, an offense against black community;
- 2. interactional criterion:** these social actors call upon thousands of Brazilians to correct books by a technodiscourse call, where the image of Machado de Assis appears whitened, exchanging it for a real image, recreated based on historical data, respecting its features, its origin and the tone of your skin;
- 3. enunciative criterion:** this substitution of the whitened photograph by the real photograph by Machado de Assis seeks to constitute a historical repair that the writer Machado de Assis is entitled to;
- 4. semantic-axiological criterion:** this historical repair makes everyone aware that one of the greatest personalities in the history of Brazilian literature, is a black man and whose past, the trajectory of struggle, overcoming and resilience is similar to that of most black communities in the country;
- 5. discursive criterion:** the movement that begins based on a technographism #MachadodeAssisReal, accompanied by a virtual petition, starts to circulate in other environments both digitally and outside it;
- 6. socio-semantic criterion:** people understand the meaning, the symbolic weight, of the proposed action and show a lot of commitment, replacing in their own copies the whitened photographs with the real photograph;
- 7. pragmatic-political criterion:** the retraction initially demanded by institutional social actors gains the sense of collective struggle of blacks in general, also endorsed by other social actors.

In 2019, *Zumbi dos Palmares Faculty* profile page on Facebook posted a speech made by the rector of the institution Prof. Ph.D José Vicente, with the picture of black Machado de Assis placed in the place of the old one (where he is still white) as we can

see in image 2. The image is also very illustrative of this collective configuration, therefore political, that the movement acquired. In the occasion, the rector he said that

[the exchange] allows the reformulation of judgments and values and makes the writer an important reference to the black community in the country. It establishes and confirms that black people have extraordinary knowledge, skills and competences and great power as an inventive, creative and transformative genius. Raises self-esteem, generates a model to be admired and followed, becomes a positive reference. Promotes and elevates the feeling of pride, honor and enthusiasm and empowerment for the entire black community in Brazil.

**Image 2** - Screenshot of a posting *Zumbi dos Palmares Faculty* profile page on Facebook, showing the exchange of photographs.



Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/universidade.zumbidospalmares/photos/a.210212122383213/2610612012343200>

This discursive fact briefly analyzed, the demand for historical repair of the way to portray Machado de Assis as he truly was, that is, respecting his origin and the tone of his skin, his phenotype, poses a question of a theoretical nature in relation to the concept of discursive resignification, which can also reflect upon the militant role of non-linguists.

### 3 A bit more of analysis

As Paveau (2019a, 2019b, 2020) shows us, discursive resignification can take place in different ways. Perhaps the most explicit form of resignification is the vehement rebuttal of an insult. This mode of resignification can be observed in the following Manifest in repudiation of the attacks that the journalist Patricia Campos Mello suffered by Jair Bolsonaro because she revealed that enterprises were sending messages using WhatsApp in the 2018 presidential elections. As a response to it, Bolsonaro said that the journalist, Patricia Campos had access to such information by sexually insinuating to obtain the information. We can see below we the text of this Manifest

Manifest in repudiation of attacks on journalist Patricia Campos Mello

We, the undersigned journalists, repudiate the sordid and liar attacks made in testimony to the Fake News CPMI by Hans River, a former employee of the company Yacows, specializing in mass shooting of WhatsApp messages, to Folha de S.Paulo journalist Patricia Campos Mello.

Without presenting any evidence, the deponent accused the reporter, one of the most serious and awarded in Brazil, of using attempts to seduce him to obtain information and forge publications.

It is unacceptable for these lies to gain space in a Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry that has the scope of investigating the use of social networks and messaging services like WhatsApp to spread fake news.

We, journalists and women from different media, vehemently repudiate this attack, which is not only on Patricia Campos Mello, but on all women and our right to work and inform. We are not going to admit that trying to silence female voices by spreading lies and propagating old and hateful sexist stigmas.<sup>5</sup>

The Manifest was created because the journalist from *Folha de S. Paulo*, Patricia Campos Mello, has suffered several attacks on her honor, first by Hans River in testimony to the CPMI of Fake News in the Congress, and then by President Bolsonaro himself, who, in a speech to supporters outside the Planalto Palace on February 18, 2020, said with sexual innuendo: “She wanted to get the scoop. She wanted to give the scoop.”

This insulting statement by the president makes reference to Hans River's testimony, given the previous week, during the CPMI of Fake News in Congress. Several social and institutional actors manifested themselves repudiating Bolsonaro's insults. These manifestations were then re-signified and came to be understood not as a personal

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<sup>5</sup> Available at: <https://www.conjur.com.br/2020-fev-12/jornalistas-repudiam-ataques-reporter-patricia-campos-mello>. Access in 04/09/2021.

insult to the journalist or to women in general, but to all people who defend democracy in Brazil. In other terms, close to what Paveau postulates, what was an initial demand for the reparation of an insult is transformed into a collective fight for democracy.

During a ceremony held at the *Planalto Palace* on October, 11, 2020, Bolsonaro said “there is no point in running away from this, running away from reality. We have to stop being a country of faggots. Look what a full plate for the press. A full plate for the vulture that is back there. We have to face it with our chests wide open, face it. Which generation is this generation of ours?”. After this misogynistic and homophobic statement, many social actors manifested themselves resignifying the term *faggot*. One of these resigning manifestations stated: “Bolsonaro, the faggots face everything with an open heart - and they want vaccine”, and was published on the same day of the president's statement, on the UOL website by the columnist Fefito.<sup>6</sup>

The author of the text uses a scientific metalanguage when he brings one of the dictionary definitions of the term *faggot* and, in the sequence, moves this metalanguage to another one, the metalanguage of apolitical order. He writes: “Even if he referred to 'faggot' only and only as 'coward' - something that the Brazilian people are not”. We present below an extract of this journalistic column:

Since March, when the country went into isolation, 163,000 deaths have occurred because of the coronavirus. There are more than 100 thousand families directly affected by the loss of a loved one. There are more than 100 thousand families wishing that others did not go through the same as them, hoping for a vaccine. This Tuesday (9), when asked by the press about the suspension of Anvisa to the development of the Coronavac vaccine in Brazil, President Jair Bolsonaro was categorical: “Everything is now a pandemic, it has to end this business, hey. I'm sorry, we're all going to die someday, and everyone's going to die here. There's no use running away from it, running away from reality. You have to stop being a country sissy country”. For those unfamiliar with the term, one of its definitions in the dictionary is: “male person who behaves in feminine ways; effeminate”. In other words: in one stroke, Bolsonaro disqualifies women and homosexuals. Even though he referred to “sissies” only and exclusively as “coward” - something that the Brazilian people are not -, he should know that, given his history of statements, the first interpretation is the most obvious.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Available at: <https://www.uol.com.br/splash/colunas/feffito/2020/11/10/bolsonaro-os-maricas-enfrentam-tudo-de-peito-aberto---e-querem-vacina.htm>. Access in 04/09/2021.

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <https://www.uol.com.br/splash/colunas/feffito/2020/11/10/bolsonaro-os-maricas-enfrentam-tudo-de-peito-aberto---e-querem-vacina.htm>. Access in 04/09/2021.

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Then we can see the passage from a scientific metalanguage to a metalanguage of the order of the political, that legitimizes the postulated resignification and gains the sense of a collective struggle of the members of the LGBTQIA+ community and is also transformed into a demand for vaccines when the journalist states that “the open-breasted LGBTs have taken too much especially from politicians who seem to forget that LGBTphobia has been criminalized” and “what the country needs is for the open-breasted government to accelerate the search for a vaccine”.

Resignification work done by a non-linguist, who proposes a change from the negative axiological value of the term *faggot* to a positive one is also supported by the readers, as can be seen in the comment posted by an internet user soon after the article was published saying that “this is an abject being, I hope he tastes his own poison soon”.

#### **4 A particular kind of resignification: the humorous one**

In the article entitled *Non-linguists do linguistics: an anti-eliminative approach to folk theories* Paveau (2008), comments that:

being a non-linguist is not a permanent state, but an activity practicable at a time and place determined by linguists themselves; there is a non-linguist position, always exchangeable with some other (Paveau, 2008, p. 23).

According to the author, the question of the identification of non-linguists is one of the most difficult ones as far as folk knowledge are concerned. If, on the one hand, the professional identification of linguists is done by the existence of courses or diplomas, that one of the non-linguists is not based on any reliable criteria. Paveau (Paveau, 2008, p. 23) questions whether a writer, a jurist, or a reviewer of written media and publishing houses can be considered folk linguists. For her, we are tempted to say absolutely, but what about when we think of the common speaker?

the "man of the streets", who admires the beauty of the lexicon or complains about the degradation of the language (a very typical subject in France, [as in Brazil] a country whose language is constantly the object of inflamed polemics) immediately relativizes this judgment: the first three seem, in any case, more "linguists" than the last one, the common speaker, who occupies more a true space of a "weekend linguist", a somewhat naïve figure, and, deep down, quite uneducated (Paveau, 2008, p. 24).

Thus, Paveau (Paveau, 2008) asks how we can identify this category of speakers who produce statements about language and discourse from non-academic and subjective positions? In an attempt to answer this question, the author proposes a typology drawn from existing works on folk linguistics. The positions are classified by decreasing "coefficients" of holding linguistic knowledge:

- Professional linguists, who provide linguistic descriptions.
- Non-linguistic scientists ("historian-linguist", like Éric Mension-Rigau in his *Aristocrats and Grand Bourgeois*: education, traditions, values, "sociologist-linguist", like Pierre Bourdieu in his *The distinction: social critique of judgment*), who propose linguistic descriptions.
- Amateur linguists (lay linguists, academics like Maurice Druon, jurists like Gérard Cornu, who provide descriptions and prescriptions).
- Logophiles, glossomaniacs, and other "language madmen" like Jean-Pierre Brisset or George Orwell, who often undertook interventions in language, either by invention or by deformation.
- Preparers-revisers-editors (the legendary copidesque of the *Monde*, Jean-Pierre Collignon, whose successors produced a discourse on his "linguistic" activity in the blog "Langue saucepiquante"; the specialists of television programs, such as the "professor" Capelovici and his successors in the program *Des chiffres et des lettres*, for example), who suggest descriptions and prescriptions (including corrections).
- Writers, essayists (Proust, Jean Paulhan, Pierre Daninos, Philippe Jullian, Robert Beauvais...), on the side of description and prescription.
- Ludolinguists (humorists, imitators, authors of silly stories, authors of games on words: Thierry Le Luron doing imitations of the Valéry politician René Marie Georges Giscard d'Estaing, Sylvie Joly and her "Bourgeoise" [Bourgeois] character, Florence Foresti and her Anne- -Sophie de la Coquillette, Coluche and her "beauf" [brute, coarse, macho man]), who do linguistic descriptions-interpretations. (emphasis mine).
- Engaged, militant or passionate speakers, jurists in their textual and oral practices, centered on description and intervention.
- Ordinary speakers (the saleswoman in the antique store in the rue de la Chine, the unknown authors in the reader's columns of newspapers and magazines and the posts in blogs and forums, the "dominants" cited by Jean-Claude Passeron, who undoubtedly mix the three types of practices (Paveau, 2008, p. 7, our translation).

## 5 Ludolinguists, humor and resignification

The category of ludolinguists may also include professionals other than those proposed by Marie-Anne Paveau. For example, many different professionals who do not fit into the categories of humorists, imitators, authors of silly stories, etc. produced texts as the ones we will see below (Images 3 and 4). In this sense, a very relevant fact is the name *Bolsonero*. This name, constructed by replacing the phoneme [a] with the phoneme [e], makes an interdiscursive reference to the insane Roman Emperor Nero, who set fire to Rome and, while the city was in flames, quietly played his harp.

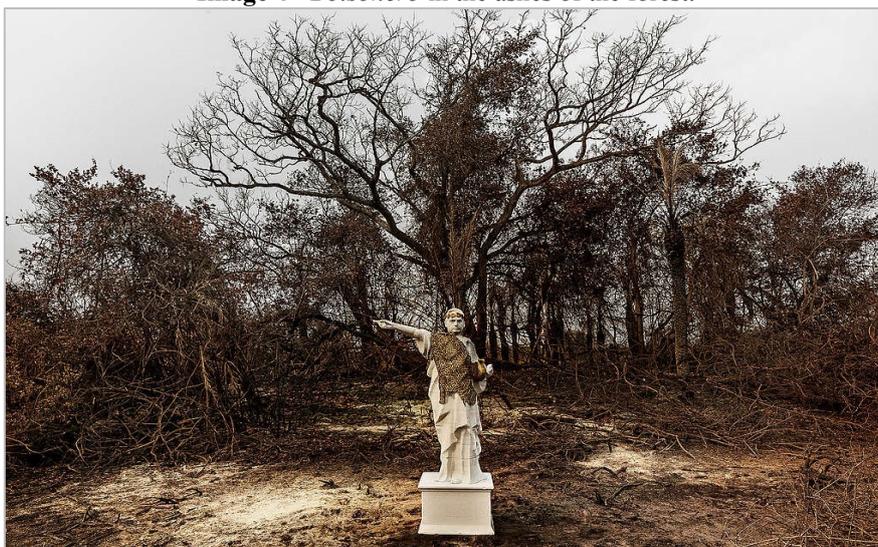
Attesting to the use of this form is the cover of the weekly magazine *IstoÉ*, number 2592 from August 30 of 2019. This front cover was published in the midst of the numerous criticisms that Bolsonaro received, especially from international actors and institutions because of his ineffective actions against the fires that destroyed practically the entire Pantanal of Mato Grosso state and much of the Amazon. The examples are presented below:

**Image 3 - Bolsonaro**



Source: <https://istoe.com.br/edicao/2592/>

**Image 4 - Bolsonaro in the ashes of the forest.**



Source: <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/cartaexpressa/bolsonaro-vira-bolsonero-e-ganha-estatua-no-pantanal/>

This association of Bolsonaro with Nero, through the designation *Bolsonero*, not only went viral on the social networks, but also gained a physical "tribute". Greenpeace Brazil placed a statue of Bolsonaro dressed as the Roman Emperor Nero, *Bolsonero* (Image 4) - in Pantanal as a way to protest against Brazilian government's disastrous fight against the fires in this important Brazilian biome. Moreover, in 2020, also due to the ineffectiveness of the Brazilian government's measures in Covid-19 management, this designation had international repercussions from its mention in a publication in one of the world's most respected periodicals *The Economist* in a report intitled: "BolsoNero: Brazil's president fiddles as pandemic looms"<sup>8</sup>.

Another very relevant fact is the name *Bolsocaró*<sup>9</sup>, created by non-linguists from the substitution of the phoneme [n] by the phoneme [k], thus creating the noun *Bolsocaró*. This name was created to designate an advertising campaign in which professionals denounce the high prices of products (food, cooking gas, gasoline, etc.) during Bolsonaro's government. Below (Image 5) we can see some posters that circulate with the term and the criticism to the President:

Image 5 - *Bolsocaró / Bolsoexpensive*



Source: <https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2021/03/07/bolsocaró-assista-o-video-que-critica-com-humor-a-alta-de-precos-no-atual-governo>

The advertising campaign created by designers from São Paulo denounces the rise in prices during Jair Bolsonaro's government: "TÁ MUITO CARO - TÁ NA CONTA

<sup>8</sup> Available at: <https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2020/03/26/brazils-president-fiddles-as-a-pandemic-looms>. Access in 04/09/2021.

<sup>9</sup> This translation in English would be something like *Bolsoexpensive*.

DO BOLSONARO - \$ - ESSA CONTA NÃO É NOSSA - O BRASIL NÃO MERECE ISSO”.<sup>10</sup> This is a set of posters elaborated from a scenography of product advertisements in supermarkets and that were spread throughout several points of the capital of São Paulo in the *lambe-lambe*<sup>11</sup> format. This #Bolsocaro campaign has also spread through the social networks with a 1.14 minute video, published on Youtube<sup>12</sup>, that simulates the voice of a narrator advertising products in a supermarket.

In this video narrator's voice in the video not only denounces the unbridled rise in product prices during Bolsonaro's government, usually making a comparison between the value of the price of the products in 2018, before Bolsonaro's election, and in 2021. The video mentions the decrease in the value of the emergency aid and also some events that are still unclear, led by the Bolsonaro family: such as the checkbooks deposited by Fabrício Queiroz in Michele Bolsonaro's account; the purchase of the mansion in a prime area of Brasilia for six million reais by Senator Flávio Bolsonaro, among other examples.

Moreover, during the video, the narrator's voice is interspersed with images that metonymically represent Bolsonaro: the gesture of the gun with his hands; the holy card used by Bolsonaro during the 2018 campaign, and there is also a subversion of the short phrase used by Bolsoraro's supporters in 2018 - *é bom jairseacostumando*<sup>13</sup> - which, in the narrator's voice becomes *é bom jairseendividando*<sup>14</sup>. The video ends with the narrator saying *supererrado/superwrong* - phonetic allusion to supermarket - *Bolsocaro*, putting his hand in your pocket and costing you very, very dearly. This is a kind of parody of supermarket product advertising, showing precisely how the prices of products have risen during the first two years of Jair Bolsonaro's government. This video went viral on social networks and was even shared on the profiles of numerous politicians and artists.

From the point of view of an approach that seeks to integrate the work of non-linguists to the professionals of the language sciences, the data presented are relevant, because besides the humorous criticism that is made to the government of Jair Bolsonaro

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<sup>10</sup> Our translation: “IT IS TOO EXPENSIVE - IT IS IN BOLSONARO'S ACCOUNT - \$ - THIS ACCOUNT IS NOT OURS - BRAZIL DOES NOT DESERVES IT”.

<sup>11</sup> "Lick-lick poster, or poster-bomber, is an artistic poster of varying size that is pasted in public spaces. They can be painted individually with latex paint, spray or gouache. When made in series, their reproduction can be through photo copiers or silkscreen" Available at: <https://www.taubate.sp.gov.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/6-%C2%A6-ano-ARTE-ativ.-06-P-%C2%A6ster-lambe-lambe.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aE\\_QcfLPYmU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aE_QcfLPYmU). Access in 04/09/2021.

<sup>13</sup> In English it would be something like "it is better to get used to Jair".

<sup>14</sup> In English it would be something like "it is better to go into debt".

in relation to its environmental policy and the skyrocketing prices of basic products, they also produce a kind of intervention in the language, which because of its intense circulation, especially in social networks, caused different social and even institutional actors to refer to the president sometimes as *Bolsonero*, as evidenced by the use in *The Economist* article, and sometimes as *Bolsocaro*, as we can check in many posts on the social network profiles.

About this practice in language, Paveau (2020, p. 36) tells us "ordinary linguists finally propose interventions on language. These are often spontaneous propositions, generally regularizing and aimed at facilitating the use of French [of any other language] by making it more democratic." However, in the data proposed, the problem is not to make a certain linguistic use more democratic, but rather from a change in the proper name Bolsonaro to *Bolsonero* or *Bolsocaro*, to propose criticism in relation to government environmental and pricing policy, dialoguing interdiscursively with the empty promises of the then candidate for president of Brazil.

## 6 Endnotes

The data we have analyzed in this paper, although few in number, show us that non-linguists mobilizes on the one hand metadiscourses about Bolsonaro's language and on the other hand provokes a humorous practices beyond cathartic releases for all the harm the current president has done to Brazilian society (by resignifying his language or name Bolsonaro sometimes as *Bolsonero* and sometimes as *Bolsocaro*, for example) Specifically in relation to these last two designations, unlike the typology proposed by Paveau, there is a humorous resignification that does not start from an insult - for example, to transform it into a collective struggle of a certain social group, as also is the case of the resignification of the term *faggot*, or even of Bolsonaro's insult to the journalist of *Folha de S. Paulo*, previously analyzed.

In fact, in the cases under analysis, this new type of humorous resignification presents itself as a criticism of the low effectiveness of the government regarding environmental protection and price policy, and transforms this criticism into a flag of collective struggle for environmental preservation and lower prices. However, making no distinction to social groups, that is, it is not the anti-racist struggle of the black movement

or the anti-homophobic struggle of the LGBTQIA+ community or women's claims, but the struggle of a larger collective. Not starting from an insult but from a social critique and becoming the struggle of a larger collective rather than a group, are the two features that briefly distinguish humorous resignification from the others proposed by Paveau (2019a, 2019b, 2020).

To conclude this paper, we would like to touch on the issue of hate speech, so acclimatized today in our society of "informational libertarianism" and which increasingly crystallize power relations: of men over women; of whites over blacks; of straights over homosexuals; of Christians over those who profess other faiths, in short of equals over different. These power relations are daily exacerbated on the web. In this sense, we understand that the discursive resignification operated or not by ludolinguists can be a good antidote to these hate speeches, that is, a kind of enunciative antivenom, which turns the discursive poison into medicine, since this discourse is not "simply what one fights for or dominates, but what one fights for, what one fights for" (Foucault, 1971/1996, p. 12).

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## **Contribution**

**Roberto Leiser Baronas:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Julia Lourenço Costa:** Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Tamires Cristina Bonani Conti:** Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Visualization, Writing – original draft.

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