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Verbal violence in explicit expressions of linguistic prejudice on Facebook: an emic discursive space

A violência verbal em manifestações explícitas de preconceito linguístico no Facebook: um espaço discursivo êmico

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Abstract: This article examines verbal violence in comments produced on the social media Facebook, on the page "*Falei errado? O pobrema não é meu, é seu*" (Did I say it wrong? The problem is not mine, it's yours), after a publication with the subtitles "*Não é engraçado, #ÉPreconceitoLinguístico*" (It's not funny, #ItsLinguisticPrejudice). The objective is to verify the discursive roles and places, the stereotyped socio-psychological statutes and the political-ideological positions that are in the discursive practices of the subject-users, considering that the controversy is driven by a scientific observation – in particular, of Sociolinguistics – according to which disapproval, disgust or disrespect for less prestige linguistic varieties are configured as linguistic prejudice and intolerance. To this end, the foundation was given in an interdisciplinary theoretical-methodological framework that encompasses studies on the origins of Brazilian Portuguese (BAXTER; LUCCHESI, 1997; NARO; SCHERRE, 2003), the notion of discursive polemics (AMOSSY, 2011), the notions of inter-understanding

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and discursive space (MAINGUENEAU, 1997, 2008, 2015) and, finally, the category of emic space (BAUMAN, 2001). The analyzes reveal that many speeches reflect a desire to annihilate and erase social identities and that, even in contexts of discussion on linguistic prejudice, verbal violence does not focus only on this theme, but encompasses everything that, in a certain way, represents social minorities.

Keywords: verbal violence; linguistic prejudice; emic discursive space; Facebook.

Resumo: Este artigo examina a violência verbal em comentários produzidos na mídia social *Facebook*, na página "Falei errado? O pobrema não é meu, é seu", após uma publicação com a legenda "Não é engraçado, #ÉPreconceitoLinguístico". É o objetivo verificar os papéis e lugares discursivos, os estatutos sócio-psicológicos estereotipados e os posicionamentos político-ideológicos presentes nas práticas discursivas dos sujeitos-usuários, considerando que a controvérsia é impulsionada por uma constatação científica – em particular, da Sociolinguística – segundo a qual a reprovação, a repulsa ou o desrespeito às variedades linguísticas de menor prestígio social se configuram como preconceito e intolerância linguísticos. Para tanto, a fundamentação se deu em um quadro teórico-metodológico interdisciplinar que abrange os estudos das origens do português brasileiro (BAXTER; LUCCHESI, 1997; NARO; SCHERRE, 2003), a noção de polêmica discursiva (AMOSSY, 2011), as noções de interincompreensão e espaço discursivo (MAINGUENEAU, 1997, 2008, 2015) e, por fim, a categoria de espaço êmico (BAUMAN, 2001). As análises revelam que muitos discursos refletem um anseio de aniquilamento e de apagamento de identidades sociais e que, mesmo em contextos de discussão sobre preconceito linguístico, a violência verbal não se centra somente nessa temática, mas abrange tudo aquilo que, de certa forma, representa as minorias sociais.

Palavras-chave: violência verbal; preconceito linguístico; espaço discursivo êmico; *Facebook*.

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1 Initial Considerations

This article focuses on the phenomenon of verbal violence in discursive comment practices on a Facebook page entitled "*Falei errado? O pobrema não é meu, é seu*" (Did I say it wrong? The problem is not

mine, it's yours).[1] The page name reveals relativization of the concept of error, frequently debated by Sociolinguistics researchers, for many of whom, from a scientific point of view, there is no "Portuguese error" among the language native speakers, since they are fully capable of differentiating grammatical and ungrammatical statements (BAGNO, 2015). What is commonly labeled a "Portuguese error" would actually be deviations from the official Portuguese language orthography or from normative grammar rules. However, these deviations – the supposed "errors" – have been scientifically explained by Sociolinguistics studies, which seek to identify and describe the rules that govern the variable uses of our language, showing that this is an object constituted of ordered heterogeneity (WEINREICH; LABOV ; HERZOG, 2006).

Starting from these premises, the creators of the page had the initiative to "precisely show the most common occurrences of orality and explain that there is a rule for them."[2] The replacement of the L sound for the R sound, for example, as shown in the page name (*"pobrema,"* instead of *"problema"*), is called rhotacism by linguists, and it is explained by the strong articulatory similarity between the two sounds, which have already been interchanged throughout history in several languages, including in the opposite way, called lambdacism.[3] Occasions like this are often the target of Portuguese language "inspectors," who direct criticism and insults at speakers who use these variants and at people who defend those speakers.

Based on the idea of combating the linguistic prejudice that underlies the referred page and which is explicitly expressed in its publication *"Não é engraçado, #ÉPreconceitoLinguístico"* (It's not funny, #It's Linguistic Prejudice), the objective is to verify the discursive roles and places, the stereotyped socio-psychological status and the political-ideological positions that emerge in the discourse of subject-users that, in general, mythicize linguistic prejudice, using discursive

[1] Go to: https://www.facebook.com/FaleiErradoOPobremaNaoEMeuESeu/. Access on: March 2, 2020. We emphasize that visiting the page to check out its posts is free, and there is no need to request access from the moderators. However, it is necessary to have a Facebook account to participate in interactions by comments.

[2] This is one of the objectives mentioned in the description of the page, which can be seen in the link in note 1, accessing *Sobre* (About).

[3] For more details on the investigation, refer to Bagno (1997).

strategies that implode dialogue and discard, disdain and ridicule the interlocutor, in order to expel him/her from the public debate. Following the conceptualizations of social space proposed by Bauman (2001), an emic discursive space was isolated. The statements gathered around the manifestations of linguistic prejudice of the social media under study sediment verbal violence in the recent socio-political demands field in Brazil.

Besides the initial and final considerations, the theoretical discussion was developed in the second and third sections of this article, and the fourth section presents a more detailed presentation of the page and posts in focus, as well as the analysis of the constructed corpus.

2 The origins of Brazilian Portuguese

Philosophers in classical Greece built a knowledge field aimed at conceiving the functioning of language This classical knowledge, although speculative, supports the later philosophies of language – in particular, those of the second century, before Christ –, giving it new directions, unsuspected by the Greek classics. Thus, Alexandrians' grammatical tradition, surpassed by the twentieth-century Linguistics, was centered on the prescriptive rule. As Mattos and Silva (1996) explain, many of those methods were reorganized in a Grammatical Tradition field.

In effect, the normative-prescriptive grammatical tradition is born of the perception of unity, despite its diversity, developing through pedagogical constraints to maintain a certain status of "purity" and, also,

> […] enable the study of classical Greek writers and serve as a model to be followed. In this way, one defines a dimension in understanding languages that has become hegemonic for more than twenty centuries: that of Grammatical Tradition, as support for textual criticism, focusing on the study of the written language according to the variant privileged by society, which, in literate societies, coincides with that of writers legitimized by it, ignoring the spoken variants that constitute the reality, less or more heterogeneous, of any historical language (MATTOS E SILVA, 1996, p. 22).

In fact, the normative-prescriptive grammar has remained as "the prescriptive, homogenizing and segregating ideal […], as the still

dominant model for teaching native languages in the school institution" (MATTOS E SILVA, 1996, p. 23).

Faraco (2016), when telling the social history of the Portuguese language in Brazil, unveils the series of phenomena that led to its use until it became the dominant language, and the consequent decrease in general Amazonian language and African dialects use, during and after the colonization process. Contrary to popular belief, there was no decree strong enough to root out the ancient languages. The process involved significant historical events, such as the *Cabanagem* (1840) and the Paraguayan War (1865-1870), which undermined a large part of the population speaking the general Amazonian language; the rubber cycle (1890-1929), which took half a million Portuguese-speaking settlers to the Amazon region; and, in particular, the mining cycle (early eighteenth century). The last event boosted the use of the Portuguese language, as the region of mines became an attractive pole for the settlers, previously sparsely allocated across Brazil, and also for about 600,000 Portuguese people who came from Portugal, interested in this new Brazilian wealth (FARACO, 2016).

In the case of Africans' languages in Brazil, Baxter and Lucchesi (1997)[4] point to an *irregular linguistic transmission* in the contact between slaves and the Portuguese. According to these authors, there was a simplification and/or elimination of certain grammatical structures of the Portuguese language when the Africans and their descendants started learning it, in an attempt to get closer to their mother tongues. Naro and Scherre (2003)[5] refute this idea and claim that there was no supposed simplification of grammar by the colonized people, but that the dominant language speakers modified its normally employed linguistic forms for different reasons, mainly because they thought that, thus, it would facilitate the communication process. In any case, the fact is that the dominator's language has become hegemonic, but not without undergoing significant changes in its system due to contact with other languages.

Leaving aside this complex scenario that shapes what has become Brazilian Portuguese, traditional grammars still today establish as rules what sometimes is not part of our linguistic system. Bagno (2017a) criticizes the non-correspondence between the rule and the

[4] Refer also to Lucchesi, Baxter and Ribeiro (2009).

[5] Refer also to Naro and Scherre (2007).

use of Brazilian Portuguese, unlike, for example, the grammars of European Portuguese, English, French, Italian and Spanish. Although many linguistic studies describe the factual use of Brazilian Portuguese, attesting that some structures seen as "correct" are unreal, there is still an idealization of the settler's "mother language," which is not restricted to the academic sphere but extends to the Brazilian people that believe to be experts in this supposed language.

It is, therefore, from a feeling of "care" for the Portuguese language that what Bagno (2017b, [w.p.]) calls "culture of error" emerged: "an obsession with condemning and pursuing any verbal manifestation different from that model, which in no way corresponded to the real uses of Portuguese in Brazil, not even to the uses of the dominant oligarchies." The judgment of right and wrong about the language use is the result of preciosity with the Brazilian Portuguese normative grammar, which often culminates in practices of linguistic prejudice.

Leite (2008), in her book *Preconceito e intolerância na linguagem* (Prejudice and intolerance in language), differentiates the concepts of prejudice and intolerance. According to the author, prejudice is the idea, opinion or feeling "that can lead the individual to intolerance, to the attitude of not admitting a divergent opinion and, therefore, to the attitude of reacting with violence or aggression to certain situations" (MILK, 2008, p. 20). In other words, intolerance would be the behavior, the reaction, the discursive manifestation of prejudice, due to the inability to face otherness and live with diversity.

Linguistic prejudice is usually manifested in an explicit way, unlike other types of prejudice – regarding, for example, race, social class, gender, etc. – that are not so acceptable anymore; it is not "cool" to be intolerant to blacks, women, homosexuals, the poor, and other social minorities. In this regard, Leite (2008, p. 14) states that "intolerant (or prejudiced) metalanguage camouflages (or denounces) other prejudices, of all kinds," since, nowadays, there are laws and public policies against those other prejudices, in addition to activists ready to debate.

In this movement of "camouflage" or "denunciation" in the practice of prejudiced metalanguage, we focused on the verbal violence issue on the Internet space. With this, the settler's locus of enunciation, the idealization of language and the culture of error (BAGNO, 2017b), and even the normative-prescriptive tradition, are hybridized in the discursive practices of linguistic prejudice, which design a space for

social confrontations and cultural differences in contemporary Brazilian society. It is, therefore, in this space that verbal violence in the digital media field is more clearly evidenced, and with no embarrassment.

3 Verbal violence: an emic discursive space

Flaming, or verbal violence in digital media, refers to hostile and aggressive language. In the digital space, the work of Herring (1993), entitled "Gender and democracy in computer-mediated communication," has the merit of being one of the first to research on the relation between language and online aggressiveness. In addition to Herring (1993), Culpeper (1993), Bousfield (2008) and Amossy (2011) develop works focused on the phenomenon of verbal violence in digital media. Culpeper (1993), while building a broader and more heterogeneous corpus, is concerned not only about offensive discourse in the digital space. Bousfield (2008), in direct dialogue with Culpeper, argues, among other things, that impoliteness is negotiated in the discourse, and it is not an isolated phenomenon. In this sense, it is possible to consider that verbal violence is a discursive practice that responds to given socio-historical conditions. In turn, Amossy (2011) adds that the phenomenon of verbal violence have to be examined from the characteristics of the polemical discourse.

Below, some scenarios of meanings for the term to emerge are proposed by this last author:

- In a polemical discourse, even if it works as a kind of one-way road, that is, the antagonist is attacked without reciprocal retaliation.
- In a "controversial exchange": a debate on TV or on social networks. Here, the polemical discourse can occur in a face-to-face interaction in which one tries to prevail over the other; thus, it has its provocative status.
- In the construction of a corpus: the analyst gathers antagonistic discursive practices about a specific thematic discursive formation (abortion, marijuana legalization, firearms license, etc.).

Thus, for Amossy (2011), the notion of controversy comprises a way of managing conflicts through intense polarization and radicalization of enunciative positions. She states, with Garand (1998), that controversy

is based more on conflicts than on verbal violence, which would be a reiterated, but not necessary, characteristic of the polemical practice, whereas the polarization of points of view and their confrontation are a way to manage the conflict that constitutes polemics. But, in any case, verbal violence is built within controversy.

However, as it will be seen in the corpus of analysis, controversy over linguistic prejudice needs to be understood not only as "staging" and gratuitous hostility, but also as a way of excluding and eliminating the other's voice and body. And not only by the subject-users in their comment practices, but also by the conflicting and provocative scenography of the discourse which appears on the page *"Falei errado? O pobrema não é meu, é seu,"* since, in the validation of this scenography, the subject-moderators call "normative" those who ignore research in Sociolinguistics.[6] It is, therefore, an open arena whose radicalization of opinions materializes as all kinds of prejudice and produces effects of meaning of tension and conflict.

However, with regard to the focused post, unlike other posts made on the same page, this "digital arena" does little or almost nothing to encourage verbal violence or even hostility among subject-users, as happens in other media (refer to DEBRAY, 1993; MAINGUENEAU, 2006, 2013): discussion forums or news sites (refer to AMOSSY, 2011; BALOCCO; SHEPHERD, 2017). The verbal violence on the focused page occurs in a polemical pre-built space. That is, polemics is not produced by the enunciators involved, but its borders have been constructed in the course of history; therefore, enunciators can take the place of polemics. In this sense, controversy on linguistic prejudice stems from a reciprocal inter-incomprehension (MAINGUENEAU, 2008), in the constant crossing between "public opinion" and the science of language, erected throughout the twentieth century, thus managing the conditions of enunciation of the clashing positions, as noted by Mattos and Silva (1996), Baxter and Lucchesi (1997), Naro and Scherre (2003,

[6] On the page *"Falei errado? O pobrema não é meu, é seu,"* it is possible to find several pejorative posts about those who defend normative grammar as "correct." One of the most attacked figures is the Brazilian professor, grammarian and philologist Evanildo Bechara. However, in this article, the focus will be on the discursive analysis of the comments on the pinned post of the page, as previously mentioned.

2007), Lucchesi, Baxter and Ribeiro (2009), Faraco (2016), and Bagno (2017a, 2017b), about linguistic policies around the mother tongue.

From this perspective, it is possible to speak of the emergence of an emic discursive space in which verbal violence is the discursive manifestation of prejudice and intolerance, which are already consolidated in social, cultural, and collective memory. In fact, in this space, besides a divergent opinion not being allowed (LEITE, 2008), the other's presence is expelled, whose identity is to be erased and, ultimately, the physical presence eliminated.

The bases of the notion of emic discursive space come from the discussions of Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009), in *Tristes tropiques* (1998), which the Polish sociologist Bauman (1925-2017) retakes to postulate the notions of phagic and emic [social] spaces. Regarding the emic space, Bauman (2001) adds that it is an attempt to annul the other's physical existence; a direct way of expelling the other from the social body, in order to erase the person's identity. Bauman cites deportation, imprisonment and murder as "contemporary alternatives" to this strategy.

However, the contemporary alternatives exemplified by Bauman are nothing more than trans-secular strategies to expel the other or even aggressive subterfuges to chase away his/her presence, as demonstrated by Foucault (1987). In contemporary times, particularly in democratic societies, the emic strategy works in a much more subtle way. It is the real estate speculation, diamond customers, re-urbanization of slums, luxury condominiums, among others, that exist to expel the other, but not any other.

In the discourse field, it is possible to speak, as suggested by Ferreira, Ferreira and Chaves (2018, p. 66), of a discursive space "in which verbal exchanges are inter-incomprehensible and the physical existence of the other is unbearable, and therefore, his annihilation is desirable." At this point, it is possible to rely on the specification of Maingueneau (2008) regarding the notion of discursive space. As the French linguist explains, discursive spaces are subsets of discursive positions that analysts, in view of their objectives, believe to be relevant to relate. These are, therefore, subsets of positions that can be isolated within a discursive field (political, religious, literary, media), at the analysts' discretion.

Nevertheless, the way discursive spaces within the digital media field are isolated started from another criterion. The discursive space

– called emic in this text – is the consequence of an effect of global meaning: urban violence. It is not difficult to come across TV programs, radio or Internet channels dedicated to transmitting clippings of urban violence (harassment of bandits, scams by fraudsters, reports of theft and murder, murders, etc.). The strategy is to build digital scenarios of widespread violence. In turn, the verbal scenography of "violence," "revolt," or "revenge" is validated through performative utterances.

In debates in the digital space, the effect of meaning of "violence" can be perceived in a more "concise" way ("the Internet is violent," "the Internet does not forgive"). In this sense, controversy, misunderstanding, disgust, censorship and hatred, that is, everything can be retained in one place: the digital space. Thus, given the modes of producing, circulating, disseminating, memorizing and archiving the discourse in this space, verbal violence becomes more common and profuse.

Little omitted on the Internet, verbal violence often reveals the desire for annihilating and erasing identities. In the sense of Bakhtin (1995),[7] regardless of the use of swearwords, discursive practices in the emic discursive space are constituted by centrifugal forces. In fact, in such an isolated space, verbal violence renounces politeness and abdicates its pseudo-modesty. For this reason, it is a space in constant construction in the social and historical dimensions, which Bauman (2001) conceptualizes as an emic space. In the discursive dimension, however, it is treated as an emic discursive space, since it is the practices of verbal violence gathered by the analyst that configure the emic status of the discursive space.

In an emic discursive space, the alternative to coping with otherness has, in general, been carried out in a way that disdains, denies, demonstrates a lack of empathy, seeks disagreement, uses taboo language (cursing, swearing), satirizes, ridicules, and threatens the other (CULPEPER, 1993; BOUSFIELD, 2008). However, a paradoxical phenomenon can be observed to the extent that in these spaces the exercise of citizenship is claimed in and by the discursive practices of verbal violence. Thus, one plays with closure of positions, even though

[7] Bakhtin (1995), in his studies, postulates the existence of two forces operating in the genres of discourses: the centripetal forces and the centrifugal forces. The former make the genres homogeneous and stabilize them; the latter, in turn, make them heterogeneous and destabilize them.

within the notion of citizenship there is the "open" idea of the enjoyment of rights. The conflict forum, as it is manifested by verbal violence, often reveals the very desire to annihilate any possibility of facing otherness.

Discursive inter-incomprehension is widespread, but it can be better evidenced in a space of exchange whose verbal violence is the guiding thread. For this reason, the emic discursive space produces effects of meaning of polemics, since it integrates historically constructed prejudices, conflicts, and tensions. The discourses that circulate there are already inserted in a set of semes divided into two registers: positive semes and negative semes, claimed and rejected, respectively, as explained by Maingueneau (2008):

> […] each discursive position is associated with a device that makes it interpret the statements of its Other, translating them into the categories of the negative register of its own system. In other words, these statements by the Other are only "understood" within the semantic closure of the interpreter; in order to constitute and preserve its identity in the discursive space, the discourse cannot be related to the Other as such, but only as the simulacrum that is built from it (MAINGUENEAU, 2008, p. 99-100).

Following Ferreira, Ferreira and Chaves (2018, p. 68), it is possible to say that verbal violence "has to do with the socio-historical and cultural conditions of discourse production. The emic discursive space is occupied by enunciative positions, historically, in ideological conflagration." It is, therefore, in this space of clashes and verbal violence that discursive roles and places, stereotyped socio-psychological status and political-ideological positions emerge. In the next section, an incursion into these three dimensions (lines of force) will be made, with analysis of the comments selected.

4 Did I say it wrong? The problem is ours!

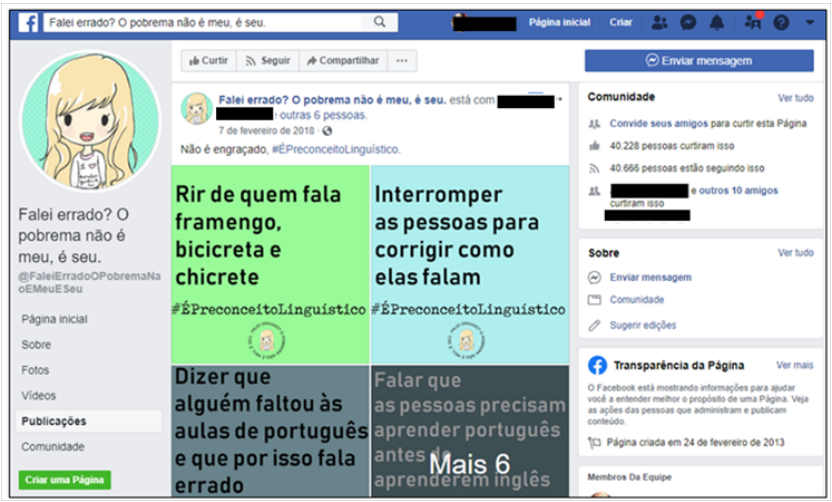
On Facebook, we used the search tool to find any post that brought the expression "linguistic prejudice." Then, we've found the page *"Falei errado? O pobrema não é meu, é seu,"* created by UERJ students in 2013, with over 40 thousand followers.[8] The objective of

[8] Until the submission of this article (March 2020), 40,585 followers.

the page, according its moderators, is "to demystify the notion of right and wrong in the Portuguese language; show that the prejudice against who speaks a non-standard Portuguese is only of the person that judges; show the most common occurrences of orality […]", among others.[9] The initiative became an Extension Project, which had been awarded at UERJ *Sem Muros* (Without Walls) in the year of its creation.

Since February 2018, the page presents a pinned post that has already stimulated more than 21 thousand shares and more than 4.1 thousand comments. Thus, we focused on the comments, taken as discourses, from this post, whose hashtag is *"Não é engraçado, #ÉPreconceitoLinguístico"* (It's not funny, #It'sLinguistic Prejudice). In this post, it is possible to observe (Figures 1 e 2) nine images describing situations that, for the subject-moderators, are linguistic prejudice**.**

FIGURE 1 – Page layout, with its pinned post[10]



[9] Available at: https://www.facebook.com/pg/FaleiErradoOPobremaNaoEMeuESeu/about/?ref=page_internal. Access on: March 2, 2020

[10] Names and images that could identify Facebook users were omitted for reasons of an ethical nature.

FIGURE 2 – Images attached to the post

As seen, common attitudes of Brazilian people faced with everyday situations of variable language uses, commonly associate with non-standard Portuguese and which can be considered linguistic prejudice manifestations, were listed. The moderation expresses here the need for the individuals to pay attention to their actions while interacting with people who appear to be unaware of the rules so that they are not intolerant.

The publication generated immediate repercussions, inspiring controversial points of view by numerous Facebook users. In general, the comments disagree with regard to the statements in Figures 1 and 2 being linguistic prejudice. Regarding figures 1 and 2 above, six comments have been chosen among those with the most explicit linguistic prejudice manifestation, in order to be analyzed. As it will be seen, beyond the mere disagreement, the controversy focuses more on the lexical item "prejudice" than on the lexical item "linguistic." In other words, to retake the differentiation proposed by Leite (2008), the intolerance revealed in the public debate in question is the result of prejudice already consolidated in social and collective memory.

In fact, the hostile and aggressive language transformed into text in the comments under analysis unveils discourses that, when brought together, generate a space for exchanges whose objective is to eliminate the other through the denial of linguistic prejudice. It is these discourses that the interpretative approach which we operate in the construction of the corpus aims to problematize. To examine the phenomenon of verbal violence, comments are taken as discourse and some lines of force are highlighted: i) discursive roles and places; ii) stereotyped socio-psychological status, and iii) political-ideological positions.

These lines of force are borrowed from Maingueneau (2016), when this author discusses the notion of discursive ethos. Here, however, we will not speak in terms of the construction of ethos, but of discourses in conflict with the interdiscourse. In effect, the discursive lines of force interact with each other. So, it is possible to see that the discursive roles and places have affinities with the fact that the enunciators mobilize an ethical-moral discourse, for example, but also that, within these discourses, stereotyped socio-psychological status emerge validated in a positive or negative way in social and collective memory. And, as it will be presented below, within these crossings, the enunciators inscribe political-ideological positions that mitigate linguistic prejudice.

4.1 The roles and discursive places

> **Comment 1**[11]
>
> "I see an imbecile generation that puts everything as prejudice but does not worry about at least doing their obligation to be ethical, study, fight for what they want and not to defend an easy way of reaching at any cost wherever they want. A loser generation that only cares about *mimimis* and guaranteeing their rights without honoring their obligations. Prejudice? C'mon!"

In Comment 1, the lexical item "prejudice" is taken with no specification. Thus, the enunciator can associate the lack of ethics, study, effort, with "an imbecile generation," which only defends "an easy way"

[11] We emphasize that the comments selected for analysis were transcribed literally, without adaptations and corrections; they are transcribed in the same way they appear on Facebook.

of reaching, "at any cost," wherever they want. What is denied here is the role and discursive place of a "loser generation," which, although is "alert" to defend their rights, do so through "*mimimis,*" supposedly "without honoring their obligations." The term "*mimimi*" is very used in discussion on the Internet. It is a pejorative expression used informally to satirize and ridicule who questions something, as if this person lived complaining (CULPEPER, 1993; BOUSFIELD, 2008).

As mentioned earlier, in Comment 1, there is no reference to the issue of linguistic prejudice, except that we know that the discussion was stimulated by the Facebook page *"Falei errado? O pobrema não é meu, é seu,"* by the post *"Não é engraçado, #ÉPreconceitoLinguístico."* But, even assuming that the speaker is referring to linguistic prejudice and not to other types of prejudice, it is fair to ask why someone who suffers from linguistic prejudice would not be ethical, studious, "fighter," etc.

Indeed, the "prejudice" that the speaker denies is much broader and historically situated. It is not just a question of denying linguistic prejudice towards socially deprived classes. The enunciator aims to expel from the social space an entire generation that seeks to "guarantee their rights," acquired, above all, in the last thirty-five years, in the process of Brazilian redemocratization. We can see there a discursive place and role emerging against this "loser generation," which does not "honor their obligations" and that complains about everything. It is the place of another, probably previous, generation, possibly educated on more traditional grounds, and whose meritocratic discourse resonates within a liberal pedagogy, which, as emphasized by Libâneo (2005).

> […] supports the idea that the function of the school is to prepare individuals for the performance of social roles, according to individual aptitudes. For this, individuals need to learn to adapt to the values and rules in force in class society, through the development of individual culture. The emphasis on the cultural aspect hides the reality of class differences, because, although it spreads the idea of equal opportunities, it does not take into account unequal conditions (LIBÂNEO, 2005, p. 21-22).

In this direction, verbal violence crosses the discourse of Comment 1 to neglect the struggle for rights to the detriment of adapting to the values and rules in force in a society. Values and rules that Grammatical Tradition, for example, also preserves as a historical

and ideological monument, since it focuses on the study of the written language according to the variant privileged by society, and ignores the spoken variants, as emphasized by Mattos e Silva (1996).

With no doubt, it is the counterattack of a previous generation that strives to "accentuate humanistic teaching, of general culture, in which the student is educated to achieve, by his own effort, his complete fulfillment as a person" (LIBÂNEO , 2005, p. 22). The enunciator thus occupies the discursive role and place of the "winner" who has adapted to the values and social rules of a class society, thus refuting any restraint of his/her privileges.

It is worth noting that, at no time, in any of the nine situations listed in the images of the post, there was suggestion that people should stop studying or fighting for what they want or honoring their obligations in order to succeed in their lives – nor that the absence of studies and conformity with their situation are ways to achieve success. However, the enunciator did not appear to argue against the idea exposed but against what the page moderators supposedly represent, using *ad hominem* arguments, criticizing (attacking) the authors of the post, and not specifically the content addressed.

Comment 2

> "Machado de Assis, one of the greatest exponents of the Portuguese language, must be turning in his grave for seeing so much bullshit and stupidity. Just for the record for these bunch of assholes, Machado de Assis was black in Brazil after the abolition of slavery, he had never had a chance to go to school, even so he didn't play the victim and studied on his own, becoming a minister and one of the greatest writers of the country. That is why I leave here my humble "go screw yourselves" bunch of lazy people."

In the discourse of Comment 2, verbal violence, at first, reveals lack of comprehension of the proposal of the page *"Falei errado? O pobrema não é meu, é seu."* The aforementioned page and post aim to discuss the spoken modality, and not the writing modality, of the language. However, this type of "misunderstanding" serves not only to say to "a bunch of lazy people" to "go screw themselves," but also to bring to the textual surface a literate society which would match that of the writers legitimized by it (MATTOS E SILVA, 1996). It is what

Bagno (2017b) rightly calls the "culture of error" – a feeling of care for the Portuguese language; an obstinacy for denouncing and policing any verbal manifestation different from the standard language.

It is true that if Machado de Assis, "one of the greatest exponents of the Portuguese language," was a twenty-first century author, would not write in the nineteenth-century style. Still, there is no doubt that his literary production would be as exceptional today as it was in his time. Anyway, the verbal violence in Comment 2 reveals other discourses that can be found in Brazilian society's current socio-historical conditions. Two discourses that cross the "purist" discourses in Comment 2 will be emphasized here.

Discussions around ethnic-racial issues are present in contemporary debates, not only in Brazil, but in other countries, outside and within universities. However, in Brazil of the twenty-first century, several movements of black activists and other sectors of society fostered the debate about the representation of black subjects.

As Ferreira and Chaves (2018) emphasize, these groups of debates did not find

> […] effective ways of showing the potential of black identity for oneself and for the Other except for affirmative actions, such as racial quotas for admission to public universities and reservation of effective positions in the civil service. Another domain, at the same time longer and more perennial, is constituted, through education, by Law 10.639/2003 and by the discursive practices around it (FERREIRA; CHAVES, 2018, p. 166).

In the core of this debate, an "antagonistic" discourse emerges, striving to disqualify affirmative policies around the ethnic-racial issue in Brazil. In this way, the discourse in Comment 2 inscribes a model reader, "bunch of lazy people," at whom the offense is directed. It is fair to say that the mobilization of lexical items "black," "slavery" and "victim" inscribes the enunciator in the discursive role of that who sees, in racial affirmative policies, social injustice. That is, the enunciator understands the struggle of black subjects in Brazil today as playing the victim or "*mimimis.*" "Machado de Assis was black in Brazil after the abolition of slavery, he had never had a chance to go to school, even so he didn't play the victim and studied on his own."

We know that Machado de Assis' biography says something else, but for the speaker of Comment 2, the catchphrases matter: "was black," "didn't play the victim" and "studied on his own." Therefore, we can conjecture that black men and women in Brazil should not "play the victim" and, in particular, should "study on their own" to, perhaps, become renowned "ministers" or "writers." But the clash occurs, among other issues, by the discursive guidelines and practices around Law 10.639/2003, from the political-educational field of a Brazil "structurally racist, which, however, is under the aegis of multiracialism and multiculturalism" (FERREIRA; CHAVES, 2018, p. 167). Here, the ethnic-racial discourse stands out.

Another discourse that it is possible to highlight is very recurrent in the "winner" ethos. It is the meritocratic discourse, which takes place, as already said, in the construction of a liberal pedagogy, in the beginning of the twentieth century in Brazil. Libâneo (2005) clarifies:

> The term liberal does not have the meaning of "advanced," "democratic," "open," as it is usually used. Liberal doctrine appeared as a justification for the capitalist system which, by defending the predominance of freedom and individual interests in society, established a form of social organization based on private ownership of the means of production, also called class society. Liberal pedagogy, therefore, is a manifestation of this type of society. Brazilian education, at least in the last fifty years, has been marked by liberal tendencies, in their conservative and renewed forms. Evidently, these trends are manifested, concretely, in school practices and in the pedagogical ideas of many teachers, even though they are not aware of this influence (LIBÂNEO, 2005, p. 21.).

This occurs not only in the pedagogical ideology of male and female teachers, but also in the collective and social memory of the Brazilian population, which often assumes the discursive role of an entrepreneurial subject (DARDOT; LAVAL, 2016), which ignores the material and social conditions as elements of parity between individuals. In addition, the enunciator assumes the discursive role of an expert on the settler's language, in a flagrantly anti-scientific movement. It thus occupies the discursive place of the productive, humble and struggling subject, aiming to highlight personal fulfillment to the detriment of the community. More than that. In Comment 2, the enunciator emphasizes

personality as a new form of power. "That is why I leave here my humble "go screw yourselves" bunch of lazy people."

4.2 The stereotyped socio-psychological status

Comment 3

> "Sorry people, but Linguistic Prejudice my ass, Brazilians seem to like being dumb, I can't believe it! It is not the country, it is the people what upsets me. I hope I can get rich, get out of here and never come back … // R"

In this subsection, the theme of linguistic prejudice is marked linguistically in the discourse: "Linguistic Prejudice my ass." Although it is possible to see here the discursive roles and places mentioned by the speaker, the stereotyped socio-psychological status in the controversial relationship is highlighted. The taboo cursing that the lexical item "ass" materializes produces an effect of meaning of that who "got into conversation" when the discussion was already heated, seeking, without delay, to disagree from the other's point of view (CULPEPER, 1993; BOUSFIELD, 2008).

In Comment 3, the enunciator mobilizes several stereotypes. Nevertheless, these stereotypes are based on some myths already discussed by Bagno (2015), such as the one where the Brazilian does not know the Portuguese language and that it is necessary to know normative grammar in order to speak and write well. Thus, the association between not knowing "grammar" and being "dumb" emerges from social and collective memory, that is, being intellectually incapable of mastering the standard language. In this sense, the stereotyped socio-psychological status of "lack of intelligence" falls, almost always, on socially deprived classes, which had little or no access to education. It is this *other* that the speaker wants to get rid of: "I hope I can get rich, get out of here and never come back." In a way, the rise to wealth would be the reward for those who master the standard language. And, paradoxically, the reward for "knowing the Portuguese language" is to leave the country where it is spoken.

In the eighth image of the post, there are the hashtag *"Chamar alguém de burro por falar diferente da Norma Padrão #ÉPreconceitoLinguístico"* ("Call someone dumb for speaking

differently from the Standard Language #It's Linguistic Prejudice." The use of the word "dumb" in this comic strip may have triggered the offense of Comment 3, as if the authors of the post acknowledged that in Brazil there are Brazilian "dumbs," but that they deserve the complacency of the other "non-dumbs," to the point of resigning themselves to their status and seeming "to like being dumb." On the other hand, the enunciator may not even have read this comic strip, but ended up putting herself in one of the classic situations listed as an example of linguistic prejudice.

Comment 4

> "[…] so, for me it is kinda pansy to speak wrong for finding it cute or for laziness … There is no linguistic prejudice for those who speak wrong 'on purpose' because the information is there."

The stereotyped socio-psychological status in Comment 4 justifies linguistic prejudice by mobilizing homophobic discourse. At this point, the production of verbal violence employs inappropriate identity markers (CULPEPER, 1993; BOUSFIELD, 2008) with the use of the lexical item "pansy" to refer to people who "speak wrong."[12] However, being "pansy" would be deliberate. In other words, there are those who speak "wrong" on purpose and there is no linguistic prejudice for this group of individuals. Therefore, those who have information should not speak "wrong," since "the information is there." In this perspective, the "error" would be the consequence of lack of information and laziness.

The stigma of the "lazy," validated negatively, is part of the social and collective memory of many Brazilians. It is a construction that resumes discursive practices from past centuries on indigenous indolence, the belief in the inferiority of miscegenation, the effects of heat in the Tropics, passing through literature (*Urupês,* Monteiro Lobato; *Macunaíma*, Mário de Andrade), through music (*O orvalho vem caindo*, Noel Rosa); national cinema (*Jeca Tatu*, Mazzaropi); humorous comic strips (*Chico Bento*, Maurício de Sousa), and finally, opinion polls. In this sense, the discourse is socio-historical and culturally determined, conducted and materialized by different genres of discourse. Lack of information, therefore, may be a consequence of the category of discursively constructed laziness.

[12] "Pansy": it is a derogatory way used to refer to homosexual men.

Therefore, this is not an ordinary "error." It must be a stigmatized "error" in the less socially prestigious classes, associated with lack of information of a specific group in society. Therefore, to be considered an "error," the speaker must "find it cute" and be lazy, which would also characterize as being "pansy." Anyway, one does not hear about "error" when the speaker occupies the prestigious places in the socioeconomic and cultural fabric of society. As Bagno emphasizes (2013, w.p.), the "error" "has already become a rule in the language spoken by the most educated citizens, it goes unnoticed and no longer causes chills or earaches."

Returning to a point of the homophobic discourse that was not addressed, in the selection and construction of the corpus under analysis, the relation between linguistic prejudice and sexuality was not common, not to say non-existent. In our opinion, the association produced by the enunciator in Comment 4 receives more support from the practice of verbal violence than from homophobic discourse. It turns out that not always calling the other a "pansy" produced effects of meaning of prejudice or homophobia. Until recently, we witnessed several humorous programs on open TV using derogatory jokes about homosexuals. It is, therefore, the socio-historical and cultural conditions of the current society that produce, through discursive practices of resistance, the spaces for these insults to be considered homophobic.

How Cano and Celestino (2019, p. 210) stress:

> […] heteronormativity works as a discursive formation that sediments and regularizes what easily escapes from its normalizing devices: sexuality and the diversity inherent in it. Consequence of this normative force it is the evidence that, in the enunciative-discursive practice, there is, in discourses constituted by the discursive formations of heteronormativity, the consolidation of foreign bodies that have their place of belonging to social groups denied due to their sexual identification divergent from the binary world proposed by heteronormativity.

4.3 Political-ideological positions

Comments 5 and 6 are now analyzed together.

Comment 5

> "It is a problem of those who do not strive to learn. I don't correct it, I do make fun of it!!! And if they ask me how they write, I answer, "I've learned it at school, go back there cause you can do it too." Only the person who wants to be dumb is dumb. Left-wing politics' damn tactic of wanting to think it's normal for people to write wrong so that they can gradually destroy the language of an entire nation. One thing is to speak informally, using slang, another thing is to be stupid and even speak wrong. And by the way, page owner, before I forget, go fuck yourself"

Comment 6

> "There is no linguistic prejudice, unless you consider the prejudice someone will suffer from speaking a foreign language. What exists is an absurd amount of functional illiterates created by a pathetic education system in a country that has been increasingly destroyed by Marxism."

In the current socio-historical and cultural conditions of contemporary societies, political discourse crosses more heterogeneous spaces of communication. As a result, not only are social authors diverse, but also the material supports for producing, circulating, disseminating, memorizing and archiving these discourses are abundant. Indeed, currently, political enunciation is not restricted to sessions in Parliament, trade union meetings, specialized programs; it can be found in media spaces and, especially, on social networks.

In this sense, it is difficult to speak of political discourse without considering the existing division in the discourse. In other words, interdiscourse precedes discourse (MAINGUENEAU, 2008, p. 20). In this perspective, the political-ideological positions in comments on the Internet are determined by a historical, material, and cultural division. In other words, the digital "comment" discourse genre participates, somehow, in society's history. As Maingueneau (2015, p. 70) teaches us, "the study of the emergence, disappearance or marginalization of genres constitutes […] a privileged observatory of social changes." Therefore, the conditions of existence of the digital "comment" genre respond to a conjectural preeminence of contemporary society.

Unlike the association between sexuality and "speaking wrong," which is transformed into text in Comment 4, the association between political tendencies (left, Marxism, '*petismo*,' and the post on the page occurred more frequently in the comments on linguistic prejudice. This may have an explanation for the fact that the subject-moderators of the page occupy the humanities course university students' discursive position. In the current socio-political situation in Brazil, the public university has become a center of political resistance to attacks against democracy, education and, in particular, research and science. In this way, it is the university student's position that the antagonistic enunciators try to implode. "And by the way, page owner, before I forget, go fuck yourself."[13]

In Comment 5 – besides the approach to the meritocratic discourse: "It is a problem of those who do not strive to learn;" the belief of unilateral teaching: "And if they ask me how they write, I answer, "I've learned it at school, go back there cause you can do it too;""[14] and the stereotyped socio-psychological status of "dumbness": "Only the person who wants to be dumb is dumb," – we highlight the political-ideological positions that emerge in the hostile enunciation. In Comment 6, the enunciator's evocation of "Marxism" to justify the "destruction of the country" has ideological roots from the 1930s onwards (refer to PERICÁS, 2016). These positions can be placed within a political-media field.

Both comments, however, evoke the belief that the left-wing politics is using strategies to destroy something that was previously solid, effective and consistent, in this case language and education: "Left-wing politics' damn tactic of wanting to think it's normal for people to write wrong so that they can gradually destroy the language of an entire nation" or "What exists is an absurd amount of functional illiterates created by a pathetic education system in a country that has been increasingly destroyed by Marxism." It does not matter if the ideas of the above speakers are not verifiable in Brazil's social and political history. Controversy, polemics or even verbal violence are often taken

[13] Also, in Brazil, since 2013 there has been a media effect of political-party polarization.
[14] It is possible to observe here another "misunderstanding" about the discussion proposed on the page in focus.

as an opportunity for communication between strangers. Amossy (2011, w.p.) clarifies this point as follows:

> Online discussion forums in the press give people the opportunity to "get to know" opponents with whom they would otherwise not have an opportunity to argue. In this sense, they provide an imaginary agora - albeit of a very particular type, since it is based on antagonism and verbal violence. Stripped of their social status and all previous authority by using pseudonyms, Internet users are like masks that issue free and dissenting opinions in a carnival forum, in the sense of Bakhtin: in a space empty of all consecrated truth and Free from common standard politeness, ideas are constantly tested and challenged irreverently. In this public space in which the virtual forum redoubles and modifies the real forums, arguments and counter-arguments collide, conflicts of opinion are expressed in a rational and highly emotional way, divisions are exacerbated and explained.[15] (AMOSSY, 2011, w.p, our translation)

As Amossy (2011) suggests, these practices aim to maintain social ties and coexistence in dissensus; however, the discourses that cross them respond, as previously said, to a conjectural preeminence. In terms of Discourse Analysis, they concern the socio-historical and cultural conditions of contemporary times.

The political-ideological positions in the discourse of Comments 5 and 6 are at the center of the political-media field in Brazil's current political, social and economic situations. Verbal violence, hostility

[15] In the original: "Les forums de discussion de la presse électronique donnent aux individus la possibilité de « rencontrer » les opposants avec lesquels ils pourraient, sans cela, n'avoir aucune possibilité de débattre. Ils fournissent bien en ce sens une *agora* imaginaire – bien que d'un genre très particulier, puisque fondée sur l'antagonisme et la violence verbale. Dépouillés de leur statut social et de toute autorité préalable par l'usage des pseudonymes, les internautes sont comme des masques qui font entendre des opinions libres et discordantes dans un forum carnavalesque, au sens de Bakhtine : dans un espace vidé de toute vérité consacrée et libéré des normes de politesse ordinaires, les idées ne cessent de se tester et de se contester sous une forme irrévérencieuse. Dans cet espace public où le forum virtuel redouble et modifie les forums réels, des arguments et des contre-arguments s'entrechoquent, des conflits d'opinion s'expriment par des voies à la fois rationnelles et fortement émotionnelles, des divisions s'exacerbent et s'explicitent" (AMOSSY, 2011, w.p).

and contempt for the interlocutor in this field do not occur only in the discussion of linguistic prejudice, but in everything that, in a way, represents social minorities. The more the elite feels threatened, the more it will resort to illegal means and corruption to remain in power, say Bobbio, Matteucci and Pasquino (2009). When "ordinary citizens" take the place of the conservative elite's word in comments on social media, the strategy has been lying, violence, hostility, indifference and, invariably, the desire to annihilate the other.

5 Final Considerations

This article aimed to investigate the phenomenon of verbal violence in comments produced on the Facebook page *"Falei errado? O pobrema não é meu, é seu,"* and the post entitled *"Não é engraçado, #EPreconceitoLinguístico"* was chosen for analysis. The discursive roles and places, the stereotyped socio-psychological status and the political-ideological positions within an emic discursive space were the focus of study. Constructed in this way, the statements, in the core of this space, could be treated by their emergence in the socio-historical and cultural conditions of today's Brazil, and not only by their media conditions that increasingly create a "civilizing" link in the Internet subject-users, eager to speak.

In times when scientific knowledge loses space for personal impressions and judgments, there is an urgent need for the academic community to position itself even more strongly. Much has been said and is still being said about linguistic prejudice, but without focusing on the opposite point of view, on the harmonious coexistence between different ways of speaking: Linguistic Respect, which, as conceptualized by Scherre,

> […] implies the ability to listen to the other with its characteristic features, without issuing judgment of value, without jokes in bad taste, without the imperious desire to change the other's discourse, without silencing the other's voice, without prejudice, without intolerance, without bullying (SCHERRE, to be published).

The ability to listen to the other, however, will always be called into question in a culture in which the annihilation of differences is desired. We take a strong stand against a *war-verbal* culture that erodes

Linguistic Respect. We believe that the tools we have today – modest, but legitimate – give us the possibility not only to "fix" them, but to build different social scenarios.

In fact, in the social media field, opinions compete with scientific knowledge. When social demands need to be directed towards Education, for example, points of view are radicalized. In the media field, different from the "medical," "legal," "economic" ethos, the language scientist's ethos is generally incorporated by a strong anti-scientism, since in this "imaginary agora," to retake the term of Amossy (2011), almost everyone feels able to distrust (or discredit) the academic community's achievements in the language field. It is evident that the debate advances science. It turns out that the more the science of language exposes social divisions in a given society, the more its propositions are denied. It is said, as we have seen, that "prejudice does not exist," even any kind of prejudice. In other words, we would say that the more science of language promotes access to knowledge and citizenship through discourse, the more it discovers discourses antagonistic to its point of view. This is what we have evidenced in our research.

When we focus on discursive roles and places, stereotyped socio-psychological status and political-ideological positions, isolating the statements in a discursive space that we call emic, we saw emerging on the surface of the discourse what Bauman (2001) classified as the attempt to annul the other's physical existence, in order to expel him/her from the social body, annihilating him/her or erasing his/her identity. It was possible to observe that the contemporary alternatives of the emic strategy are not only found in some powerful people's political and economic strength, but are available to all individuals, in particular through the co-production of discourses on social media. It is not just verbal violence inhabiting the virtual universe of the Internet, as slogans such as "the Internet does not forgive," "the Internet is violent," and so on, suggest. It is a discourse grounded on Western culture, but which, in the current Brazilian socio-historical and cultural conditions, creates effects of meaning that make the enunciative space uninhabitable by the *other*, especially if the *other* demands in some way the overthrow of the elites' social and economic privileges.

And it is not necessary for elites to come out in open defense of their privileges. The study revealed that the emic discursive spaces are already solid in Brazilian society. In them, linguistic, ethnic-racial

and religious prejudices, verbal violence, discrimination, stereotypes, silencing the other's voice, intolerance, and bullying appear (SCHERRE, to be published). Therefore, the enunciators in Comments [1], [2], [3], [4], [5] and [6] speak of these spaces and not of "social networks," taken as simple means of message transportation. In fact, social networks like Facebook, for example, are not neutral media that carry information. They have significantly changed the use of discourses, although we can exempt them from the foundation of emic social spaces (BAUMAN, 2001). As we well know, history is marked by hatred, incomprehension, intolerance, but, in the era of multiple interlocutor networks, interlocution and dissension have acquired new values and tensions, as time and space between "cultures" have decreased, not to say that they are almost null. Verbal violence, therefore, has served as a tool to expel the other from public debate.

The incessant search for hegemony in the language responds to the desire to annihilate differences. The perception of unity, as emphasized by Mattos and Silva (1996), prohibits looking at diversity. The settler's place is invariably occupied to defend, even today, the Grammatical Tradition: not only what it "represents," but mainly what is imposed by it as a rule.Thus, the odious metalanguage, as observed in the discourses analyzed, reveals conservative socio-political demands that resort to verbal violence to mask other prejudices (LEITE, 2008). But this tactic is not innovative.

Therefore, we discovered other discourses that emerge from the phenomenon of verbal violence on the theme of linguistic prejudice, materialized by the post *"Não é engraçado, #ÉPreconceitoLinguístico,"* on the Facebook page *"Falei errado? O pobrema não é meu, é seu."* It is about the meritocratic discourse, the ethnic-racial discourse, the homophobic discourse, the political-party discourse, assumed not by the ethical-moral subject (in the flesh), but by social and discursive roles that stage in our social theater. In addition, they mobilize the same socio-psychological stereotypes to erase identities: the dumb, the lazy, the pansy, among others. We saw, then, that the statements gathered in the construction of the corpus cut, in the social media field, an emic space that we can call discursive.

Our tactic here is dialogue. Thus, we are open to it.

Authors' contribution

Samine de Almeida Benfica mobilizes questions about linguistic prejudice and the historical aspects of the Portuguese language in Brazil for discussion, in addition to building the corpus of analysis and collaborating with reflections and analyzes. Anderson Ferreira brings to the article the discursive categories of the Discourse Analysis field and also the notion of emic social space, which both authors take as a discursive space, in addition to contributing to analyzes.

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