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Culture, Ideologies and Systems of  
Politeness in Brazil



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# Contents

- **Introduction**
  
- **Chapter 1: Discourse Analysis and Discourse Competence in Language**
  
- **Chapter 2: Semantics**
  
- **Chapter 3: Pragmatics and Politeness**
  
- **Chapter 4: Brief comparison between Brazil and Spain**
- **Chapter 5: Brazilian ´s character brief aspects**
- **Chapter 6: Portuguese and the “Brazilian” Language:**
  
- **Chapter 7: Final Remarks**
  
- **Bibliography and References**

## **Introduction:**

Culture is defined in a society as the beliefs, way of life, art and customs that are shared and accepted by people in a particular society and in a group as the attitudes and beliefs about something that are shared by a particular group of people or in a particular organization.

Ideology is denoted as a set of beliefs on which a political or economic system is based, or which strongly influence the way people behave.

And finally politeness is explained as the act of behaving or speaking in a way that is correct for the social situation you are in, and showing that you are careful to consider other people's needs and feelings. [<http://www.idoconline.com/dictionary>]

The established set of beliefs, way of life and customs accepted by societies are defined by its history, heritage and ancestry.

People follow a chain preset behavioral code and acts which guide their lives. By the course of life and depending on the individual's quest level for answers about the whys of life aspects, some may analyze and question about the inner reasons of specific deep-rooted procedures in the art of living in society.

Humans are born and since a very young age when we are able to understand the language, we are taught what to do. Parents, relatives and teachers are responsible to convey a command for us to act in the process of raising an individual. And that keeps being followed in the course of life even though after we, as adults, had been given the right of choice; we still carry on being told how to behave or how we are expected to behave, by our families, superiors, group of friends and partners.

Language is, also according to the Longman Dictionary on line, a system of communication by written or spoken words, which is used by the people of a particular country or area. In that sense,

language is inevitably part of one's culture as it is shared by a specific society and it holds specific aspects understood exclusively by its speakers.

Going back to what was mentioned before, among the aspects we are accustomed of being told on how we are expected to behave; the language is the vehicle that allows people to communicate and in that way it is what sets the tone in behaving in a way that is careful and considerate to other people's needs and feelings.

Therefore, language is responsible for our acts. It is what makes it possible for us to express ourselves. We become slaves of what we say for it cannot be unsaid. Language is meaning and meaning is conveyed and attempted in different manners and intentions.

This final paper aims at presenting a brief overview on the languages aspects that guide and convey the systems of politeness in Brazil, as well as a brief comparison with Spain. Some existent bibliography on the formation of Brazilian society and its people and also a personal perspective based on the observations made throughout my experience in this country as a foreigner will be also covered. It will take into consideration aspects regarding discourse analysis, semantics, Brazilian History, the History of the Portuguese language, politeness, intercultural communication, society's description and cultural differences.

## **Chapter 1: Discourse Analysis and Discourse Competence in Language**

It is impossible to talk about language use without mentioning discourse analysis. As we use language as a communication vehicle which transports meaning. This idea is clearly conveyed by Brown and Yule on very first book's lines.

The analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which those forms are designed to serve in human affairs. (Brown and Yule, 1983; I)

Interpreting language is essentially interpreting and processing discourse. This process is a means to obtain meaning inferences and it requires a lot more than just understanding a language's syntactic and lexical aspects.



Making sense of a text is an act of interpretation that depends as much on what we as readers bring to a text as what the author puts into it. Interpretation can be seen as a set of procedures and the approach to the analysis of texts that emphasizes the mental activities involved in interpretation can be broadly called procedural. Procedural approaches emphasize the role of the reader in actively building the world of the text, based on his/her experience of the world and how states and events are characteristically manifested in it. The reader has to activate such knowledge, make inferences and constantly assess his/her interpretation in the light of the situation and the aims and goals of the text as the reader perceives them. (McCarthy, 1991; 27)

In this sense, the interpretation of texts cannot be detached from reader's subjectivity and inferences, which occur based on one's personal experiences and background which are the builders of mental models.

In the process of trying to understand a written text the reader has to perform a number of simultaneous tasks: decode the message by recognizing the written signs, interpret the message by assigning meaning to the string of words, and finally, understand what the author's intention was. In this process there are at least three participants: the writer, the text, and the reader... Reading is, therefore, inherently interactive, involving the three participants.

(Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000; 119)

Those inferences mentioned earlier are inevitable as any reader intrinsically carries out a different world view which guides his/her gateway to meaning, that is, to get the author's ideas across effectively.

It is therefore essential to mention the importance of coherence and cohesion, which are palpable tools that simplify text interpretation.

Murcia & Olshtain state that the notion of coherence incorporates ways and means by which ideas and propositions in a text are presented conceptually as coherence is the quality that makes a text conform to a consistent world view based on one's experience and culture or convention. Also, that it should be viewed as a feature related to all three participants in the interactive process: the writer, the written text and the reader. (125)

Pilar Alonso affirms that a coherent discourse is not just a set of successive sentences more or less related to each other at a surface level; it is a network of meaning that goes beyond the propositional content individually represented in each of the sentences.<sup>1</sup>

Cohesion is defined by Murcia & Olshtain as an overt feature of the text that provides surface evidence for the text's unity and connectedness and it is realized linguistically by devices and ties that are elements or units of language used to form a larger text. Moreover, they affirm that since cohesion relies heavily

on grammatical and lexical devices, it relates to the reader's linguistic competence and deficiencies in this area may cause the reader to miss important cohesive links and as a result, to have difficulties in the interpretation process.

Savignon provides a pertinent definition which includes the concepts of coherence and cohesion and it is what she calls Discourse competence:

Discourse competence is concerned not with isolated words or phrases but with the interconnectedness of a series of utterances,

written words and/or phrases to form a text, a meaningful whole. The text might be a poem, an email message, a sportscast, a telephone conversation, or a novel. Identification of isolated sounds or words contributes to interpretation of the overall meaning of the text. This is known as *bottom-up processing*. On the other hand, understanding of the theme or purpose of the text helps in the

<sup>2</sup> Comments provided at the Master Advanced English studies' Semantic class held in January 2009

interpretation of isolated sounds or words. This is known as *top-down processing*. Both are important in communicative competence.

(Savignon; Murcia; 2000, 17)

It is pertinent to mention that this so called discourse competence is paramount in interpreting discourse not only for mastering abilities in learning a foreign language as analyzing discourse is an everyday needed skill in many aspects of life, be it at one's native language, personal relationships, studies and work demands.

Yet, it is undeniable that reading comprehension is an important skill to be held in learning a foreign language as it is necessary to interpret the inner meaning of written discourse so as to master competences. It is the higher level aspect we have mentioned earlier, the competence that goes beyond being fluent in communicating in a foreign language.

In a second or foreign language, reading carries even greater potential importance than in the first language since it is often the only readily available exposure to the target language. A learner of another language will be able to retain some of the knowledge gained in a course of study continuing to read in that language for many years after graduating from the course. For anyone learning the language of a remote country, reading opens up a world of literature and culture representing that country in a manner that would not otherwise be possible.

(Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000; 118)

By the time students finish their foreign language studies as they have become master users, reading is a great source, if not the only, to keep their skills updated as well as their foreign cultural knowledge, as mentioned above. When the foreign language is not often used to communicate, reading becomes a means to avoid getting rusty and it can be done via a great array of sources such as internet, email, magazines, books, and personal network websites and so on.

## Chapter 2: Semantics

According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, Semantics is the study of the meaning of words and phrases; that is, the meaning of words, signs, sentences, its relations among one another and what they denote.

In this sense, and using Pilar Alonso's considerations, texts are units of meaning whereas sentences are units of form.

De Beaugrande states that a text will be defined as a communicative occurrence which meets seven standards of textuality. If any of these standards is not considered to have been satisfied, the text will not be communicative.

([http://www.beaugrande.com/introduction\\_to\\_text\\_linguistics.htm](http://www.beaugrande.com/introduction_to_text_linguistics.htm))

He also provides the basic notions about the standards of textuality and regulative principles which are aspects expected to be in a text, that is, what makes it favorable to communication and understanding.

The very two first standards of textuality, according to de Beaugrande, are cohesion and coherence which were object of earlier studies of a number of authors, to mention, Halliday and Hassan.

By cohesion, he states that it concerns the ways in which the components of the surface text, are mutually connected within a sequence. The surface components depend upon each other according to grammatical forms and conventions, such that cohesion rests upon grammatical dependencies.

The second standard will be called COHERENCE and concerns the ways in which the components of the TEXTUAL WORLD, i.e., the configuration of CONCEPTS and RELATIONS which *underlie* the surface text, are *mutually accessible and relevant*. A CONCEPT is definable as a configuration of knowledge (cognitive content) which can be recovered or activated with more or less unity and consistency in the mind (cf. V.4ff.). RELATIONS are the links between concepts which appear together in a textual world: each link would bear a designation of the concept



it connects to.

([http://www.beaugrande.com/introduction to text linguistics.htm](http://www.beaugrande.com/introduction%20to%20text%20linguistics.htm)).

Those so called concepts and relations are the cognitive signs and its interrelations made when discourse is interpreted. He calls this process by activation spreading, that is, the mental models which are provoked by any intent of communication.

In addition, Van Dijk presents definitions that are closely linked to the cohesion and coherence features which are the concepts of macro and microstructures in discourse; the macrostructures are defined as global semantic organization structures of complex information that is, the global meaning of a text or as a whole. The microstructures are the words, phrases, clauses, sentences and the connections between them which are processed at the local or short range level, that is, the local meaning of a text.

Those concepts are strongly attached to the notion of topic within discourse.

The notion of 'topic' is clearly an intuitively satisfactory way of describing the unifying principle which makes one stretch discourse 'about' something and the next stretch 'about' something else, for it is appealed to very frequently in the discourse analysis literature. (Brown and Yule.1983; 70)

Van Dijk also states that notions such as global meaning, global reference, topic or theme are intimately related, and macrostructures are needed to make these relations explicit. (Van Dijk. 1980; 10)

Those general notions provided are fundamental to be forward connected with topic construction and macro structural building within the object of research. The abundant existent reference source will surely be essential to develop an array of associations upon the study aims.

## Chapter 3: Pragmatics and Politeness

According to the Cambridge dictionary on line, politeness is defined as behaving in a way that is socially correct and shows awareness of and caring for other people's feelings. La Real Academia Española defines cortesía as "Demostración o acto con que se manifiesta la atención, respeto o afecto que tiene alguien a otra persona." (Demonstration or act shown for attention, respect or affection towards someone).

(<http://dictionary.cambridge.org> -11/5/2009)

The Portuguese definition from Dicionário Aurélio (1999), for instance, includes "delicadeza, amabilidade, urbanidade, cumprimento, mesura, reverência" (gentleness, kindness, urbanity, compliment, moderation, reverence). (Dicionário Aurélio Eletrônico, Versão 3.0 - Novembro de 1999 - 25/5/2009)

It is interesting to observe that a simple abstract meaning definition changes from one language to another and that is due to its different meaningful forces which varies according to each language or country. The Spanish one includes the term affection whereas the English one refers politeness to caring for other people's feelings, that is, to avoid offensive conduct. They are similar definitions, however they hold different nuances.

The words that describe politeness in Portuguese also differ from the English definition by including words such as moderation, urbanity and compliment. Those refer to the language cultural aspect of restraint, praise and refined politeness when referring to polite behavior. It also includes different aspects when compared to the Spanish definition that regards attention and respect but it does not mention kindness (*amabilidad*) or compliment (*elogio*).

The words are easily comprehensible however they surely not enough when talking about pragmatics. What is considered polite

in the Iberian Peninsula may not be over the tropics and that is a fact. And it is overwhelmingly interesting to acknowledge those differences as part of one's culture without qualifying them according to some sort of appropriateness.

Pragmatics is defined as meaning in use or interaction according to Thomas (1995) and it studies the functionality of the language in its social, cognitive and cultural dimensions. In other words, Pragmatics is the study of the invisible meaning which is implicit on the utterance and contextualized by one's language culture and expectations.

Pragmatics is, without a shadow of doubt, closely linked to meaning in communicating. It includes the ability to connect the notion of systems of politeness with other dimensions in communication: gender and cross-cultural interaction.

It also includes enhancing awareness of the functionality of language from social, cultural and cognitive perspectives as

pragmatic concepts, theories and frameworks which increase our understanding of language in use and the ability to analyze language in all kinds of contexts.

Human communication cannot be reduced to words as actions most of times speak louder and at times those actions are the only form of communication. Tomas (1995) affirms that people do not always or even say what they mean and speakers frequently mean much more than their words actually say. (pg 1)

Any human being living in social contact agrees with it as part of a daily routine. We often fear the interlocutor's response to our intentions when communicating and also our inferences are commonly misinterpreted. The social established rules make us aware of how we are supposed to act, the things one must never say, and the expected words for a variety of situations or even lying or omitting our real opinion at times. A good example is lying about your dislike for some specific food at a party so as

not to be impolite through the host's invitation and hard work to prepare the meal. Another is hiding your real points of view so as not to be excluded of a group or rejected by others. Personally this necessity of societal acceptance lies on our psychological basic need to be loved by others and this is intrinsic to every human on earth. Even the urban tribes which at first hold the intention to transgress society often gather with their fellow members of the same group. This confirms that everyone needs to belong to a group and to be accepted and understood by them.

"As you get to know people better and get involved in other parts of their lives, you start acting as a group with an inherent organizational structure"

(<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/culture/articles/031013/13tribes.htm>)

(25/5/2009)

Politeness is directly linked to the "inherent organizational structure" mentioned above. Polite behavior is a paralinguistic and non linguistic feature of the utterance explicit meaning

(contextual) and implicit force (intention), as it can be demonstrated via tone of voice and gestures.

Tomas (1995) also mentions some previous writers who were mostly interested in the second level of speaker's meaning (force) and in the social factors which lead the speaker to formulate an utterance in a particular way. Moreover they were interested in why a speaker might use an indirect rather than direct form of request, complaint, criticism, etc. (pg 21)

Holmes(1995) comments that the referential function of language is its function in conveying information, facts or content whereas the affective function refers to the use of language to convey feelings and reflect social relationships. Moreover, that an utterance is always embedded in a social context which influences its forms. (pg 3)



The selection of a particular manner in communicating is directly linked to Myers & Scotton's (2006) concept of individualistic and collectivistic cultures which guide language appropriateness. Those differences and communication problems are lit up and enhanced when talking about inter-cultural communication.

## **Chapter 4: Brief comparison between Brazil and Spain**

Brazil and Spain are undoubtedly collectivistic societies. Brazilians, for instance, have the need to belong to groups, such as: family, friends, work, churches, hobbies, charities, etc. When describing or picturing a Brazilian citizen most people come up with cordiality, happiness, generosity and friendliness. And that is a true fact. The sense of being pleasant, open and friendly towards the others is a gateway to being accepted in new groups. It is a friendliness that overcomes one's expectation and that is why it stands out.

Spaniards are overall very polite and cordial. People will often hold the door for you, respect a line, greet you and be civilized, which is slightly different than being open and friendly. On the other hand, when having closer relationships, they open up a bit more and are generous friends that you can really count on.

One aspect that differ us and Spaniards from individualistic cultures is that on those cultures people tend to speak their minds freely. In Brazil this is not a tendency for the fear of disagreeing with someone and therefore being excluded from a group by not having similar opinions and in Spain due to the fact that people are often very cautious and aware of what is said to others, mainly in relation to hierarchy and power. I have personally observed that they participated very little in class comparing to the foreigners and also that they would end the class asking one another their doubts and not directly in class to the teacher. It was very curious to me. I guess students consider impolite to question the teacher or they believe a formal distant relationship should be kept.

In order to understand Brazilian approach towards politeness it is necessary that we go further back in history.

Sergio Buarque de Holanda (1902-1982), a Brazilian historian, on his book called "Raíces de Brasil", published in 1936 after his

return from Europe and inspired by the works of Max Weber, had a deep impact on the formation of many Brazilian researchers' generations and it constitutes a fundamental reference in analyzing the obstacles that Brazil faced in consolidating as a modern and democratic State.

(<http://www.msh-paris.fr/sp/investigacion/areas-geograficas/america-latina/catedra-sergio-buarque-de-holanda/> -18/6/2009)

"El Hombre Cordial", the book's fifth chapter, evokes the logic that forms the social relationships in Brazil. It is the logic of cordiality whose original field is the family. Generally, Brazilian cordiality refers to a willing founded on the rural and patriarchal influence to act socially in relationships with the others and institutions, according to a logic of emotion, feelings and intimacy. This generated the Brazilian aversion to situations that require impersonality and formal politeness. Thus, all spheres of society are invaded by this intimacy touch, for better or worse.

(<http://sociologandouern.wordpress.com/2009/06/06/revisitando-as-raizes-resenha-de-raizes-do-brasil-de-sergio-buarque-de-holanda/> - 18/6/2009)

We simply detest formality. This can be easily noticed from a variety of examples. Starting when we have to dress up for a formal party, there is always a general complaint. As seen before, this aspect has a historical reason and that goes far in time when being formal was directly related to Portuguese nobility, which cultivated intelligence and formality as an ornament; Brazilians tended to be as different as the colonizers as possible. There is no hate in talking about the Portuguese if compared to the feelings of Latin Americans towards Spain, which is generally resentful. On the contrary, the Portuguese is generally ridiculed by Brazilians however very welcomed and received with warmth and friendliness as usual. There are no hard feelings or strong resentment.

This formality hate has a great influence in our language. It has become very informal over the time and that is mainly due to the fact of not following grammar rules at full and therefore expressing ourselves in the simplest possible way. Moreover, another aspect is the language sound. Many friends of mine

comment that even though Portuguese and Brazilians speak the same native tongue, it sounds really different as if it were another language. Nowadays our tongue can be called Brazilian Portuguese as it is considered a variation of native Portuguese.

This new language terminology relies on fact that our language is an interaction of the colonizers Portuguese language, the many Brazilian native Indian pre existent dialects, numerous African languages that arrived from 1549 and 1830 and finally the many other languages that immigrated to Brazil from Europe and Asia. This potential linguistic Babel has been defined over the last 500 years of Brazilian existence, very little time for a language yet the Brazilian contemporary format of the Portuguese language.

(<http://cvc.instituto-camoes.pt/hlp/hlpbrasil/index.html> - 19/6/2009)

As mentioned before, the lack of formality is essential to understanding politeness in Brazil. Most Brazilians are considered loud and impolite as we struggle to persuade about our personal views, we do not know how to be good listeners and any

discussion looks rather like an argument. Most members of a conversation shout to defend their opinions as if we were begging for someone to agree with us because in this way we will not be the only one holding an opinion. There is always the need of a group to back us up and to be used as a shield.

This discussion scenario is a rule and no one is going to be frowned upon if behaving exactly like that. On the other hand, reserved, shy, silent and introverted people will be taken as impolite for not being sociable. It is so common to listen to the comment that someone is impolite and unfriendly because they have spoken little.

I can see a clear difference with Spain by this last aspect. Although being often loud in public, Spanish people tend to be reserved, good listeners and to keep some personal opinions to themselves. On the other hand, they are very direct in the Peninsula. It is quite shocking and amazing how simple it is to say "no" in this country. It amazes me due to its liberating force.

It is so simple to say a raw "no" and not worry about if the other person is going to be angry at you, or that you are not going to please them. It is very straight forward. In Brazil, this would be taken as very offensive and rude. For example if someone invites you out and you do not want to accept the invitation, before refusing directly we tend to say that we are not sure whether or not we are going to be able to attend and we can even lie about having something else to do.

Subjectivity is fundamental in communicating in Brazil; meaning from the high context is inferred from the referent context and not through literal messages. Again, it is quite shocking to receive a face threatening "No!", "I disagree!" or "This is foolish!" in Spain. Also, the times when a server's approach is as raw as "Tell me what you would like" Qué quieres?".

At first, it seemed that Spaniards had no friendliness or closeness; they were simply irritable, cold and distant people. Or personally I had the feeling that they had something personal



against me as a foreigner. It bothered me much based on my need of being part and adapting to this society.

Another interesting aspect that I could observe in Spanish society is the need of doing everything whatsoever as fast as possible. This is seen by the agility one gets served at a restaurant, bar or store as well as among friends. So many times I had to rush to finish my drink so we could move on to another place which made me wonder if that rush matched a leisure relaxing moment. Brazilians have this easygoing slowness so as to once more avoid seriousness, rules and formality. At one aspect both societies agree and that is the fact that both of us are very hard working people.

Professor Josep M. Buades, a Spanish citizen who has been living and teaching in Brazil since 2000, published a book in 2006(Editora Contexto- São Paulo-Brazil) that talks about the Spain and Spanish society called "Os Espanhóis". He has a PhD

in History and he also has degrees in Philosophy, Modern Languages and Law.

His defines the Spaniards in the very first book's chapter:

"A Spaniard is an irritable, hot blooded person. One of their main virtues is sincerity and they will say what they think without taking into consideration the consequences their words can have. This may be often taken as arrogance. "Things are as I say and that's it". The "cultura del cabreo" enhances all aspects of daily life. You can be suddenly rudely treated at a store or at a restaurant just because you took long to order/choose something. Bad mood is common at all social classes. Don't take it personal. Understand it as a mask to hide their worries and insecurities. They use it as Brazilians use cordiality, the British pompousness and the German precision". (Pages 13/15)

Differences make mankind more colorful and interesting. It also makes us reflect about ourselves, our beliefs and our relationship with the world. Above all, we are members of human race, trying hard to get something out of life experience. Feelings do not necessarily need words or specific behavior. I have tried to take the most of Spanish politeness and also to give them some of my own. So far I have learned that over here no sentence can better picture Spaniards better than "Cara de hielo, Corazón de fuego".

## **Chapter 5: Brazilian 's character brief aspects**

Barbarian, rude, melancholic, slothful, cunning on one side, exotic, happy, courteous, on the other. These are some of the images associated to a Brazilian typology by foreigners and even by native sociologists, anthropologists, and writers. Departing from images which date from the discovery of the country, reality aims to confront them with foreigners' impressions and visions built and assumed before their real contact with Brazil and the Brazilian culture, and point out whether these contemporarily pre-fabricated impressions changed or remained the same, or if they were simply reinforced. Finally, studies over the past years have been proposing to complement this overall picture bringing up questions which relate to the process of building up the identity of a people.

[Bárbaro, grosseiro, melancólico, preguiçoso, malandro, por um lado e, por outro, exótico, alegre, cordial. Essas são algumas das imagens tradicionalmente associadas por

estrangeiros e até mesmo por sociólogos, antropólogos e escritores nativos à representação do brasileiro. Partindo de imagens construídas desde o descobrimento do Brasil, pretende-se confrontá-las com impressões e visões de estrangeiros construídas contemporaneamente, antes de suas vivências no país, pontuar de que modo elas se transformaram e/ou se reforçaram após o contato com a cultura brasileira e, finalmente, complementar esse quadro com questões pertinentes à constituição da identidade de um povo.]

[http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0103-18132008000200007&lng=en&nrm=iso](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0103-18132008000200007&lng=en&nrm=iso)

It is not easy to speak accurately about a continental and too complex country like Brazil. There are so many Brazils, so uncompleted, and every one that gets involved in such task naturally anchors in particular perspectives that can be very welcomed or simply generate deep controversy. (Siqueira, 2005).

To Stuart Hall (2005), the concept of identity is complex, little developed and misinterpreted by contemporary social science so as to be proof tested. Good or bad, we do have our peculiarities yet those are not manifested in every single Brazilian. Unfortunately, due to a contingency matter alongside our History, we tend to boost the negative aspects like our unique "jeitinho"(finding a way out any situation over friendliness) among other unpleasant titles based on stereotypes, like being shinning happy people 24/7, party animals, jokers, laid back and not very fond of hard work.

It is not only by the particularities of life, of its habits, of its language and of its institutions that people are distinguished from others. It is also by the way their temperament and collective character is represented. To Azevedo(1963,p.203) for instance, people's collective character is a synthesis of diverse elements, concordant and resistant that would combine or tend to combine among one another and in this way setting the original physiognomy of a nation. The construction of this so

called identity configuration could be explained by its formation due to the fact that it would be the great variety of geographical, ethnic, economic and social factors among which the two first ones have an important role yet not preponderant.

[Não é somente pelas particularidades de sua vida, de seus costumes, de sua língua e de suas instituições que um povo se distingue dos outros. É também pelo modo como se representa o que seria o "seu temperamento ou caráter coletivo". Para Azevedo (1963, p. 203), por exemplo, o caráter coletivo de um povo seria uma síntese de elementos os mais diversos, concordantes e resistentes, que se combinariam ou tenderiam a combinar-se, marcando a "fisionomia original" de uma nação. A construção dessa configuração identitária poderia ser explicada na sua formação, pois seria produto de grande variedade de fatores geográficos, étnicos, econômicos e sociais, dos quais os dois primeiros têm um papel importante, mas não preponderante.]

[http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0103-18132008000200007&lng=en&nrm=iso](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0103-18132008000200007&lng=en&nrm=iso)

According to Ribeiro (1995, p. 72/73), we are the promise of a new civilization remarked by singularities which are in majority, africanities. And for that reason we appear to European eyes as bizarre people which added to our native Indian tropicality, would make us exotic.

We are aware that it is not recent that, us, people born on the tropics, are seen as primitive, lazy, mischievous, idle and treated by many over the XXI century as a sub race. To many people we are still the good uncivilized from south Equator. It is obvious that such representations have brought and still bring on their core, a load of prejudice which was historically built and it surely will not dissipate easily. When there will be an opportunity, as trivial as it can be, we are going to be once again reminded by our inferiority condition of minor beings.

• Personally being a foreigner in a European country, it is sometimes so observable to acknowledge people's ignorance and lack of respect towards the equality between us, as being part of the same human race. Those comments are most of



times disguised as respectful and carrying a true sense of equality, yet they are not felt as so. We are sometimes seen as exotic cute beings, weird uncivilized people. Those are not commonly said straight to face but deep hidden in comments and points of view stated by members of so called first world.

However it seems acceptable and comprehensible not to have an idea about the unknown. I personally have no idea about people and life of many countries yet information is available for those who search for them. There is quite a difference in asking about life in another continent over the quest for curiosity and knowledge to over prejudice, disrespect and ignorance.

In my journey of planning a life time in a foreign country I often question myself when I am going to stop being seen as a cute exotic figure. When people are going to acknowledge my being as an ordinary person with its fears, likes, dislikes, qualities and faults?

It is sure very pleasant when people search for more information about my habits and country over the curiosity to get to know

me better. I am extremely proud of my background. I believe that mixing up with other roots is something wonderful which adds so much to relationships.

There is an interesting fact to be added based on my experience in living abroad. It is common for me to frustrate people due to the fact that I am not what is considered a standard Brazilian citizen over many eyes and minds. I do not dance samba neither I am very enthusiastic about soccer or carnival. I consider myself a very reserved person and I often open up among my close friends exclusively. I am rigid and organized in a sense that my home is always impeccable and clean. I generally do not like to do things without a plan and schedule. I am a very responsible and reliable person and indeed extremely hardworking.

If that description would be under no name or nationality few chances are that people would say that it belongs to a native Brazilian citizen.

In this way, by the time people come to me and make surprising comments about the strangeness that neither do I look physically Brazilian nor my character seems like a tropical one I wonder if they really believe a 180 million nation would have an unique personality.

That would be the same thing if I thought that every single Spanish citizen would be fond of the bull fights or that they would dance the Andalusian typical dance, Sevillanas.

Nobody takes us as extensions of numerous identities. Our other many talents are not seen to the point of ignoring any other intellectual Brazilian dimension. However, we ourselves contribute to the dissemination of the idea of us being exotic products. As this concept is a rule and not an exception, we should not be bothered when foreigners come to Brazil and find out that there are fantastic professors, great universities, writers and also book publishers. There is also an abundant National Library, an airplane industry and scientists creative enough to

the point of producing Flex cars(able to run on ethanol or gasoline), a national reference nowadays.

When dealing with stereotyped visions of Brazility, Brazilians are never seen as creators of ideas for instance. Why? Because we are always put in the dependency situation of a colony. It is easily acceptable to see Brazil as the country of music, football and carnival. However, there is a difficulty in taking Brazil as a land of intellectuals. Gilberto Freire, one of our major intellectuals, for instance, had only one work translated into French. Sometimes the country's projected image reflects a friendly vision that only perpetuates in a domination system, by which the Latin Americans keep being pictured as exotic products while Europeans remain the knowledge holders or according to Ribeiro(1995,p.64), as salvational commercial empires.

[Quando se lida com visões estereotipadas de brasilidade, nunca se fala dos brasileiros como produtores de idéias, por exemplo. Por quê? Porque somos sempre colocados em situação de dependência, de colônia. Aceita-se,

facilmente, o Brasil como o país da música, do futebol, do carnaval, mas tem-se dificuldade em definir o país como terra de intelectuais, como Gilberto Freyre, por exemplo, que só teve uma obra traduzida para o francês. Algumas vezes, a imagem projetada do país reflete uma visão simpática que apenas perpetua um sistema de dominação, através do qual os latino-americanos continuam sendo retratados como produtos exóticos, enquanto os europeus permanecem como os detentores de saberes ou, na visão de Ribeiro (1995, p.64), como "impérios mercantis salvacionistas".]

[http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0103-18132008000200007&lng=en&nrm=iso](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0103-18132008000200007&lng=en&nrm=iso)

The complexity of a collective character and the variety of influences that concurred to model and transform it would be sufficient to show the difficulties that appeared to anyone who has tried. Not only to sketch an explanatory graph that explains the Brazilian character yet to attach a certain number of traces taken from observations and studies and that would allow a combined impression. In addition to that, Azevedo(1963) argues

that it is not only in literature, music, arts or institutional structure, in mechanisms and processes of political life or in religion that a society conveys its character and its deepest tendencies yet in the typical family organization, ideals and educational processes. Another good example comes clearly on Gilberto Freire's studies on the patriarchal family organization in the Northeast of Brazil over the sugar cane's crops and semi-patriarchal in the South over the coffee crops as well as its influence in the formation of the Brazilian character.

Brazil is an interesting society because it holds a rooted ambiguity. It is a country of contrasts and it is at the same time modern and traditional. In this way, Brazilian society can be understood as a homogeneous whole if based at only one cause  
• or a social principle.

[O Brasil é uma sociedade interessante porque contém uma ambigüidade de raiz, é "um país dos contrastes"

(Mello Franco, 1936, p.7). Ele é, ao mesmo tempo, moderno e tradicional (DaMatta, 2004, p. 69). Assim, a sociedade brasileira não pode ser entendida como um todo homogêneo, na base de uma só causa ou de um só princípio social. ]

[http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=50103-18132008000200007&lng=en&nrm=iso](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=50103-18132008000200007&lng=en&nrm=iso)>

We do have our singularities however they are not represented in a way many people want to see them as fixed and monolithic. They are surely out there to be seen, present at home, on the streets, in social relationships, in day by day tensions, in popular manifestations, in every single soul of ours, in each particular spot of this continental country. They present and represent each piece of this land called Brazil and they are being done and redone all the time contesting all the assurances. If there is one right thing on this controversy, that is the fact that there are many countries inside a country, numerous Brazilian identities with multiples and always temporary peculiarities.

## **Chapter 6: Portuguese and the “Brazilian”**

### **Language:**

Portuguese is the language of the Portuguese, the Brazilian, many Africans and some Asian people learn it since they are born. They recognize it as national patrimony and they use the language as an instrument of communication, be it within their community or in contact with the other Portuguese speaking communities.

This language does not hold a continuous territory (yet it holds vast separate territories, in many continents) and it is not private of a community (but it is felt as their own, equally, in their different communities). In this sense, it presents great internal variety among the regions and groups that use it. Also, because of that, it is one of the main international languages of the world.

It is possible to have different perceptions on the unity or internal diversity of the Portuguese language according the observer's perspective.



Whoever focuses in the language of the writers and of the school will get a sensation of unity.

Whoever compares the spoken language of their regions (dialects) or social groups (sociolects) will not escape the sensation of diversity and even of division.

[O PORTUGUÊS é a língua que os portugueses, os brasileiros, muitos africanos e alguns asiáticos aprendem no berço, reconhecem como património nacional e utilizam como instrumento de comunicação, quer dentro da sua comunidade, quer no relacionamento com as outras comunidades lusofalantes. Esta língua não dispõe de um território contínuo (mas de vastos territórios separados, em vários continentes) e não é privativa de uma comunidade (mas é sentida como sua, por igual, em comunidades distanciadas). Por isso, apresenta grande diversidade interna, consoante as regiões e os grupos que a usam. Mas, também por isso, é uma das principais línguas internacionais do mundo. É possível ter percepções diferentes quanto à unidade ou diversidade internas do português, conforme a perspectiva do observador.

Quem se concentrar na língua dos escritores e da escola, colherá uma sensação de unidade. Quem comparar a língua falada de duas regiões (dialectos) ou grupos sociais (sociolectos) não escapará a uma sensação de diversidade, até mesmo de divisão.]

[<http://cvc.instituto-camoes.pt/conhecer/bases-tematicas/historia-da-lingua-portuguesa.html>]

The linguistic diversity Portuguese Language presents among its immense multi-continental space is inevitably going to increase over time. Linguists find themselves holding different opinions regarding the fact that at the moment the Portuguese language from Portugal and from Brazil are different languages and some agree they both constitute very distant variations inside the same language.

Indeed, those differences can be easily noticed even by those who are not able to understand the language. It is easily noticeable diverse sounds and rhythm when listening to the European variation and the Latin American one. Personally it is

commonplace to be questioned by eavesdropping people out of curiosity about which language is being spoken.

The first and paramount difference apart from the other numerous found in phonetics, semantics, grammar and pragmatics is the informality the Portuguese spoken in Brazil has become over the times. This can be more easily noticed when speaking with members of different social classes. The lack of grammar rules, the creation of new words and slang, the total unawareness of the right position pronouns and verbs that do not agree with pronouns and so on.

Paul Teyssier, on his book *The History of the Portuguese Language* recognizes that the unity in the language comes apart in sociolectal diversity. He also affirms that:

The reality, however, is that the dialectal divisions in Brazil are less geographical than socio-cultural. The differences in the manner of speaking are greater in a determined place between a

cult and intellectual man and his illiterate neighbor than between two Brazilians of the same cultural level coming from different distant regions. (1982, p.79)

[Paul Teyssier, na sua *História da língua portuguesa*, reconhece que na diversidade socioletal essa pretensa *unidade* se desfaz. Diz Teyssier:

“A realidade, porém, é que as divisões dialetais no Brasil são menos geográficas que sócio-culturais. As diferenças na maneira de falar são maiores, num determinado lugar, entre um homem culto e o vizinho analfabeto que entre dois brasileiros do mesmo nível cultural originários de duas regiões distantes uma da outra” (1982: 79).]

- This formality hate has a great influence in our language. It has become very informal over the time and that is mainly due to the fact of not following grammar rules at full and therefore expressing ourselves in the simplest possible way. Moreover, another aspect is the language sound. Many friends of mine

comment that even though Portuguese and Brazilians speak the same native tongue, it sounds really different as if it were another language. Nowadays some linguists call our tongue Brazilian Portuguese yet the Brazilian Academy of Letters(Academia Brasileira de Letras) affirms that there is no such language called Brazilian Portuguese and the language spoken in Brazil is considered a variation of native European Portuguese(Língua Portuguesa).

This new language terminology relies on fact that our language is an interaction of the colonizers Portuguese language, the many Brazilian native Indian pre existent dialects, numerous African languages that arrived from 1549 and 1830 and finally the many other languages that immigrated to Brazil from Europe and Asia. This potential linguistic Babel has been defined over the last 500 years of Brazilian existence, very little time for a language yet the Brazilian contemporary format of the Portuguese language.

(<http://cvc.instituto-camoes.pt/hlp/hlpbrasil/index.html> - 19/6/2009)

## **Chapter 7: Final Remarks**

This final project aimed at providing a brief overview on the languages aspects that guide and convey the systems of politeness in Brazil. The knowledge of the formation of the Portuguese language and its variations is paramount in understanding Pragmatics in the Brazilian Portuguese.

The cordiality, friendliness and kindness related to Brazilian people worldwide can be observed in our language and it is, personally, interesting and delightful to find out the reasons beyond that aspect.

Those topics are the subject of a future academic study in which Historical, Social and Language usage aspects will be deeper focused so as to provide a better comprehension on the Brazilian 's systems of politeness.

Differences make mankind more colorful and interesting. It also makes us reflect about ourselves, our beliefs and our relationship with the world. Above all, we are members of human race, trying hard to get something out of life experience. Feelings do not necessarily need words or specific behavior. Words are surely not enough in describing politeness be it in the Portuguese Brazilian language or anywhere worldwide. By understanding how the language conveys and guides society we surely master in social relationships and above all, in interacting with society.

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