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LINGUISTIC PREJUDICE: A CASE STUDY AT THE UNIVERSITY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION OF THE AFRO-BRAZILIAN LUSOPHONY, CEARÁ

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ABSTRACT

This study intends to conduct an investigation on the occurrence of linguistic prejudice within the University for the International Integration of Afro-Brazilian Lusophony (Unilab). For the data collection, a group of 24 students answered an investigative questionnaire with objective and subjective guiding questions. The 46% of the students are Brazilian and 54% are from Portuguese-speaking African Countries (PALOPs), in addition to East Timor. The data revealed that most informants suffered linguistic prejudice, both inside and outside the academic environment. The research shows that although this type of prejudice is not viewed by society with the same benefits as the others, it is present and deserves to be on the featured as one of the issues that can affect the lives of people of various linguistic variations.

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INTRODUCTION

Language gives us identity. It is through communication that the human being develops, interacts with his fellow men, argues certain facts and exchanges knowledge, thus establishing complex relationships. In Brazil, educational institutions are concerned with teaching students how to speak according to the standard norm, which has become a model of exclusion for those who do not master such norms (SANTANA; NEVES, 2015). Thus, this paper seeks to investigate the occurrence of linguistic prejudice within the University for the International Integration of Afro-Brazilian Lusophony (Unilab).

The Unilab: Unilab has its headquarter at Redenção village, in the Ceará state, in the Baturité Massif. UNILAB cooperates with the PALOPs (African Countries of Portuguese Official Language), namely, Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau,

Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe and East Timor what is located on the Asian continent, to implement a differentiated proposal for teaching, research and extension, uniting diverse cultures and nations, bringing together the knowledge and seeking improvements in the quality of education. A University has a huge diversity of languages and speak present in its students, which contributes to the complexity of different languages. Following these international agreements, in 2019, UNILAB, at the Redenção and Malês Campus, enrolled Brazilian and foreign students. Table 1 shows information provided by the Directorate of Academic Registration and Control (DRCA) with partial data on students enrolled in 2019. Redenção was the city chosen to host Unilab because of its relationship with the process of abolishing black slavery in Brazil, as it freed 186 enslaved people in 1883, five years before the slavery emancipation in Brazil. The State of Bahia has also benefited as if Campus Malês give UNILAB because importance within the Brazilian

Table 1. Information provided of Directorate of Academic Registration and Control - DRCA, in 2019

Campus	Course	Brazilians/as	International	Sum of result
Ceará	Public Administration	24	Twelve, yeah: Angola - 6 Guinea-Bissau - 6	36
	Agronomy	27	Seven, yeah: Angola - 1 Guinea-Bissau - 5 Mozambique - 1	34
	Pedagogy	44	02, of which: Guinea-Bissau - 02	46
Bahia	International relations	05	11, yeah: Angola - 04 Guinea-Bissau - 07	16

racial debate. Created by Law number 12.289 of July 20, 2010, Unilab seeks to promote integration among members of the communities of the PALOPs, producing and spreading scientific, cultural and educational knowledge, and contributing to the development of the region of the Baturité Massif, in which it is, installed (UNILAB, 2019). Thus, besides being based on the teaching-research-extension tripod, it differs from other Brazilian universities, since it was also born with a vocation to the principles of integration, internationalization and development in region where it is located. Depending on the different nationalities of Unilab students, the cultural differences established often generate language differences. African societies are known to be multilingual. In addition to native languages, other languages are spoken as a function of the colonization process. However, despite the diversity of languages spoken and their dialects, Portuguese remains the official language (OKOUDOWA, 2015). This diversity of languages presented by African peoples generates linguistic variations, as also occurs in Brazil, evidenced mainly when listening to speakers, who are from different realities and social contexts. According to Santana and Neves (2015), language is considered a manifestation of social practice, enabling immediate interaction. The authors argue that children in their first years of life first learn to speak, because this is one of the forms of communication that later will allow socialization. Considering the linguistic variations as something wrong, often for not following the normative grammar, which "compromises" the existence of the Portuguese language, the linguistic prejudice arises through these attitudes, underestimating and discriminating other people by the way of speaking. The grotesque idea that only those who speak according to the cultured norm are the ones who speak Portuguese correctly drives this kind of prejudice that is still little discussed, but that is present in the most varied spaces. Therefore, deserving, debate by society, because its implications can be gigantic. Therefore, being Unilab a cradle of diverse languages and cultures, we are interested in investigating to what extent students, Brazilian and/or international, are victims of linguistic prejudice.

This research is justified since, even though Unilab is committed to the principles of inland and internationalization, we first know, through the research of Lima (2014), the prejudice experienced by women students according to their age, as shown below:

In the beginning, it was the prejudice, right, the prejudice. I even got up to a day to get into a fight with an A.C. girl. (Academic Center)... [...] and then at a bus stop, on the second day of class she said she asked, "Why Grandma was on the college bench, what a Grandma wanted on the college bench. [...] In fact, not only I do not, all the people

of my age or else close to my age [...] (Diana, 49, Bachelor of Humanity/Redenção).

Second, Impanta's research (2015) that brings reports of racism experienced by African students, which is expressed below:

Student 1 –

I consider Brazil as a mestizo country. [...] Sometimes prejudice happens more in stores, this is visible in the way of serving customers. It can be seen that whites are well served, because they are thought to be rich, unlike the way a black person is served, especially when he is poor (FATUMATA).

Student 2 –

On a certain test day in class I asked the teacher for the sheet because I needed to draft, it and she said she could not take it. After a few minutes, a Brazilian woman asked for a sheet of paper, the teacher stood up and picked up a sheet of paper for her. This shocked me a lot and I thought: "If I was Brazilian, of course she would let me take the sheet", but after class, the same teacher came to talk to me saying that this was not prejudice (WINANA).

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The present study is descriptive and exploratory, with a qualitative and quantitative approach and focused on conducting a research on the occurrence of linguistic prejudice with university students from Unilab, based in Redenção (CE). For this research, we used the inductive method, which is that from the observation of certain particular cases we can arrive at a general law. Having as basis the studies and theoretical references, but also the contextualization of the importance of the debate of linguistic prejudice in the society in which we are inserted the methodology of the current study was developed involving several stages. As an instrument for data collection, a structured questionnaire with objective and subjective questions was applied to 24 students of the mentioned university. The research took place at the Auroras and Liberdade campuses, both located in the city of Redenção. Initially, as a data collection instrument, a structured questionnaire with objective and subjective questions was applied to 24 students from the mentioned university. The research took place on the Auroras and Liberdade campuses, both located in the city of Redenção. The questions contained in the questionnaire sought to investigate the existence of linguistic prejudice within the academic space studied here and were directed to university students who agreed to participate in the research. The informants were approached randomly; however, care was taken to include all the nationalities of the students present in the institution. In the approach, the students were greeted and asked if they wanted to participate in a

survey, whose theme and importance was duly explained to each of them. The answers were marked by the informants themselves and delivered to the interviewers after the end. The data obtained were compiled and analyzed through the qualitative approach through the MS Excel program (2016). The plots and graph analysis were performed, presented and discussed in this study. It is noteworthy that due to ethical principles, the identity of the informants was preserved; however, after the questions were completed the questionnaires were numbered from 1 to 24, in order to maintain the organization of the research and not run the risk of analyzing a questionnaire more than once. Thus, the name of the informant is the number that his questionnaire received.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the questionnaires answered university students participants in the research, which took place within the physical space of Unilab, the analyses and plotting of graphs were made according to the data collected. The present research was developed with 24 university students, of these 46% foreigners from the African and Asian continent and 54% Brazilian students, as shown in Figure 1 below. Figure 2 shows that there is representativeness of all African countries that have the Portuguese language as official, in addition to East Timor, an important aspect for this study, as it demonstrates the linguistic diversity that exists in that university, since the countries mentioned also have their mother tongues. According to Okoudowa (2015), in Guinea-Bissau, there are several languages, including Manjaco, Pepel, Mandinka, the Mande group's languages; in Angola and Mozambique, the Banto group's languages are spoken; and it was contact with Portuguese with African languages that generated Portuguese-based Creole in Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe.

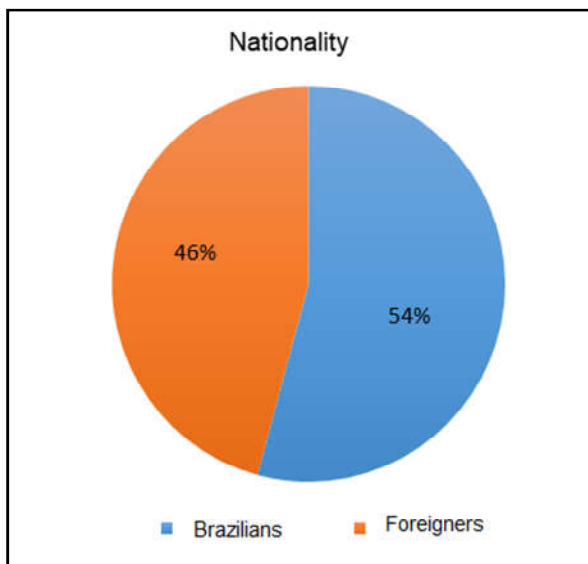


Figure 1. Representative data for the identification of research participants as to nationality

Of the Brazilian students who participated in this research, 45% were from the region of the Baturité Massif, the municipalities of Pacoti, Baturité, Aracoiaba, Redenção and Aratuba (Figure 3). For Costa (2008) the Baturité Massif has a great socio-cultural diversity, represented by indigenous peoples, quilombolas and countless traditional communities that are holders of great knowledge, therefore, with their

peculiar language characteristics and according to the environment in which they live.

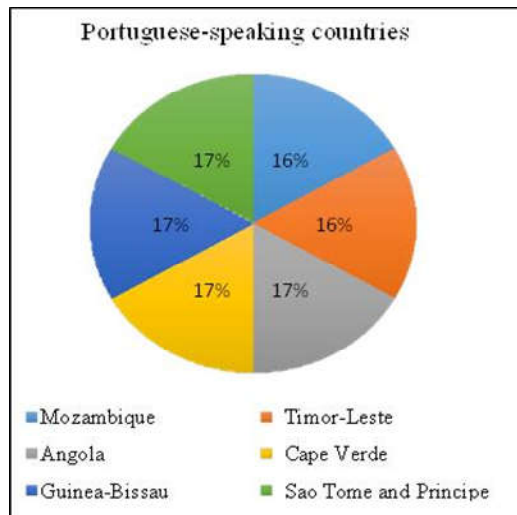


Figure 2. Countries of origin of foreign students

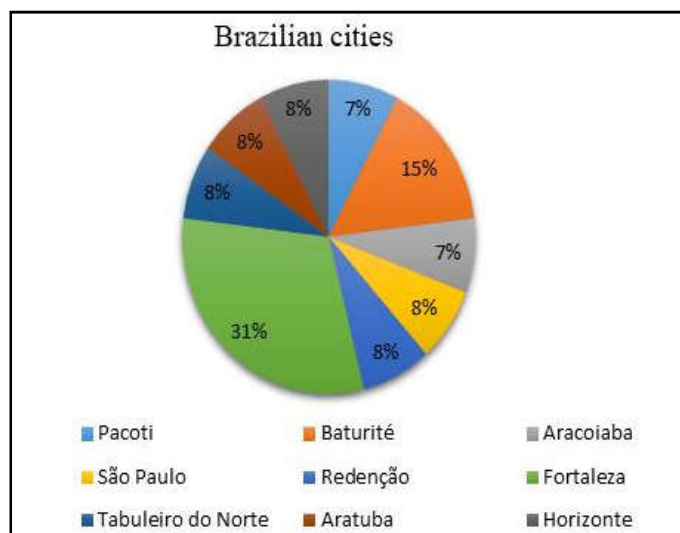


Figure 3. Cities of origin of Brazilian students

The other 55% come from the municipalities of Tabuleiro do Norte, Horizonte, Fortaleza and from the state of São Paulo, thus showing the diversity of languages within the universe studied, Unilab. When asked about having already suffered linguistic prejudice within the academic environment, 54% of the informants said no, while the remaining 46% said yes, as shown in Figure 4 below. Thus, it should be emphasized that linguistic prejudice is widely experienced within educational institutions and that it is necessary for society to reflect on a fact that affects a large number of people, preventing them from living together in society, since many times by their way of expressing themselves they are not accepted. According to Rique (2012), the school is traditionally excluding, but it can deeply contribute to the liberation and formation of the individual, since one of its roles is to socialize him/her, and interfere so that the linguistic variations, labeled as wrong, do not preclude the appreciation of culture and respect for diversity. The occurrence of linguistic prejudice is more pronounced in schools. For Santana and Neves (2015), this is noted as soon as the child arrives at school, because in this beginning of schooling the students bring a linguistic baggage acquired in the environment in which they live, with their dialects, slang, in short, several linguistic variations and for

many of these students is the first contact with the standard language at school. As shown in Figure 5, the incidence of linguistic prejudice outside the academic environment exceeds the numbers when compared to the existence of linguistic prejudice within the academic environment. 71% of informants said they had suffered from this type of prejudice outside the academic environment, and only 29% said they had not. According to the data show, the linguistic prejudice is definitely present in much of society, according to Evangelista et al. (2018), this prejudice materialized from the moment there was the denial of the language of native peoples, and they were forced to give up their mother tongue and start expressing themselves using Portuguese.

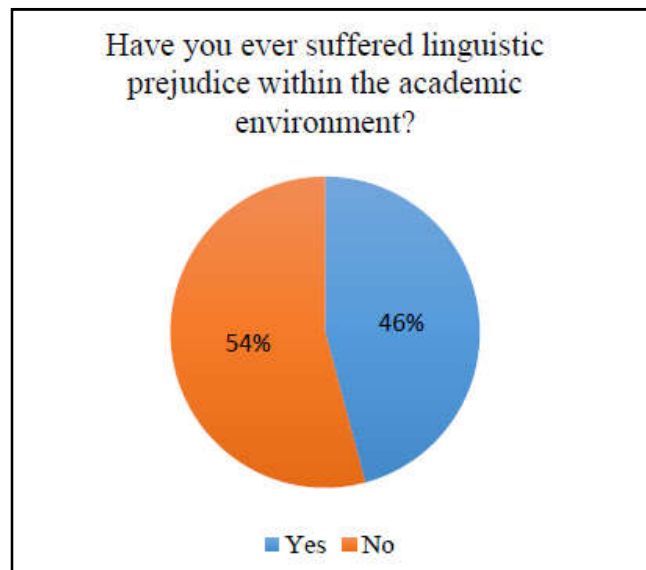


Figure 4. Representative data for question 3 of the questionnaire

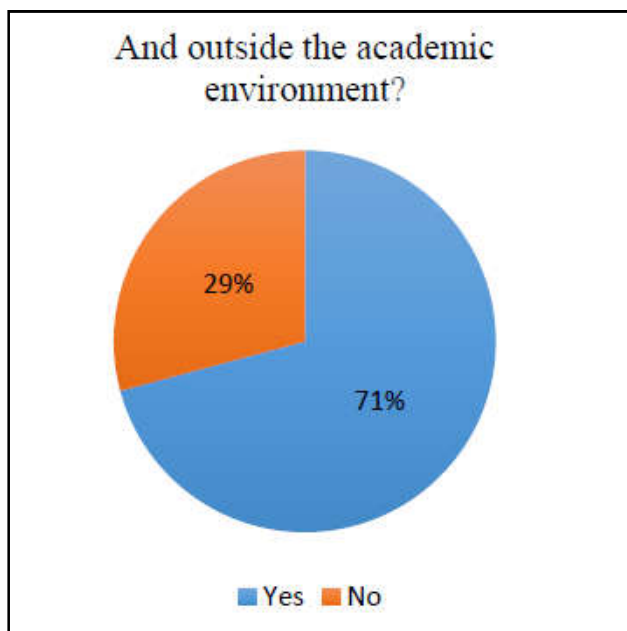


Figure 5. Representative data for question 4 of the questionnaire

When we asked the informants if they had been corrected, at Unilab, when speaking certain words 71% said yes (Figure 6), with a contradiction with question 4, in which 54% answered that they had not suffered linguistic prejudice within the academic environment. Thus, we ask: don't the informants consider the correction of certain terms as linguistic prejudice?

Alternatively, do you really believe that the only way to speak Portuguese correctly is by using normative grammar? These questions remain open for further study and discussion. However, Giacomo (2011) points out that if users of popular variants are unaware of linguistic prejudice, it has little chance of being extinguished.

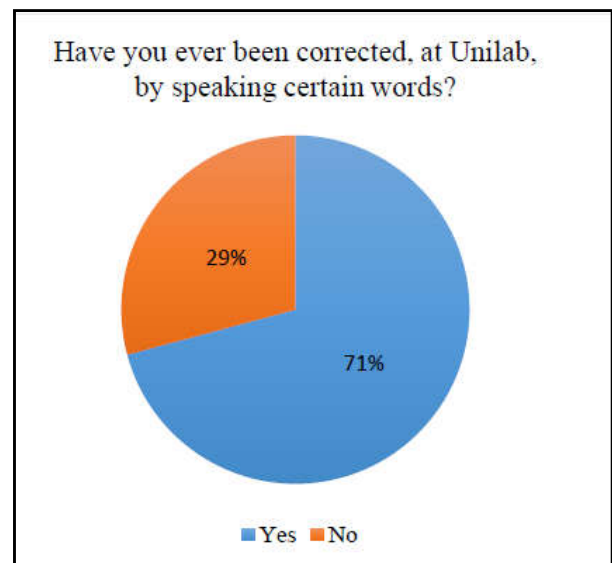


Figure 6. Representative data for Question 5 of the questionnaire

In question number 6 of the questionnaire we asked the informants: What would you do if someone corrected you? The following statements were selected according to their statements:

8 - In most cases I would do nothing because many still do not understand that each region, cultures have a different way of communicating.

18 - I would quietly accept to face the positive side of learning something new. 2 I would be grateful for the correction, but I justified that my way of speaking has to do with my accent, and that the word was correct.

3 - I stopped using that word, because it is not common to use it here. 12 I usually say that this way of speaking is from my region.

22 - I'd be embarrassed, but I'd correct the word...

24 - Depending on the way I was corrected, I would accept it well or not. I would generally accept criticism that will strengthen my language.

4 - Repeat the word and say thank you.

23 - I would appreciate it, but I'd be embarrassed.

Some informants, as noted above, understand the correction as a form of linguistic prejudice, as is the case of informants 8, 2, 12 who are aware of existing linguistic variations. The others, on the other hand, do not seem to know that language correction can be considered a linguistic prejudice, or do not know how to identify situations in which this type of prejudice occurs. In this way, they allow themselves to be interiorized by others, since they have difficulties in appreciating their own linguistic variation.

In question 7 of the questionnaire we asked: do you know someone who prefers not to speak in public for fear of making a mistake? Justify it. To this question, 54% of the informants stated yes and 46% said no, as can be seen in Figure 7 below.

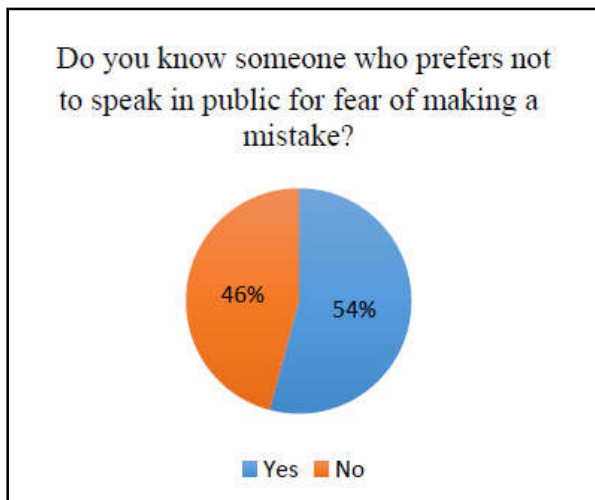


Figure 7. Representative data for Question 7 of the questionnaire

Among the justifications presented by the informants, the following stand out:

23 - *During seminars forget to speak a correct term and be embarrassed in public.*

2 - *I am one of these people: especially in the seminaries, the teachers do not understand and this is reflected in the grades obtained.*

18 - *For ignorance of the cultured norm.*

According to the above reports, it can be seen that normative grammar is still seen by many as the only correct way to speak Portuguese and this can be found in the social cycles that informants attend, especially in the academic environment, since the linguistic prejudice is reflected in the informants' reports when they claim to be afraid of being embarrassed when speaking a wrong term (informant 24), when they mention that a speech not understood by the teacher can cause a low grade (informant 2) and when they fail to express themselves orally for not following the cultured norm (informant 18). According to Lopes (2012), it is still quite common in the society in which we live, confusion about what is right and what is wrong, because it has become common practice to label as errors the different ways of speaking and as the correct standard. In question 8 of the questionnaire, we asked: for being a university student, have you already received advice on how to speak well? If possible, cite a situation. To this, question 62% answered yes and 38% answered no (Figure 8).

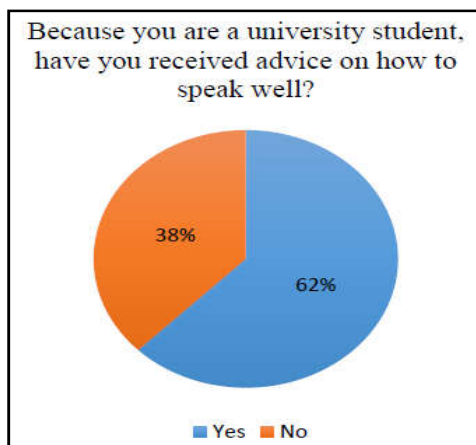


Figure 8. Representative data for question 8 of the questionnaire

Of the situations cited by the informants, it stands out:

14 - *"In a hospital you won't be able to talk loudly like that or with this slang".*

9 - *In my country this is very common, to be a university student is to be in a condition in which the linguistic variation is not well regarded by many.*

19 - *Presentation of seminars, where I was instructed to speak in a more formal way, slowly and slowly.*

23 - *Tips from teachers and classmates.*

21 - *Before the presentation of papers.*

According to the descriptions of the informants, visualized above, the linguistic variations are not accepted by society, the imposition of the cultured norm has become something common. In Brazil, even though most speak Portuguese, it presents great linguistic diversity, not only because of its continental geography, but also because it is a country of regional differences, where social injustice is also predominant, which contributes to the country remaining second in the worst income distribution in the world (BAGNO, 2005).

Question 9 of the questionnaire asked: For you, is there a correct linguistic standard to be spoken in Brazil? Justify it. To this question, 58% of the informants said no and 42% said yes, as can be seen in Figure 9.

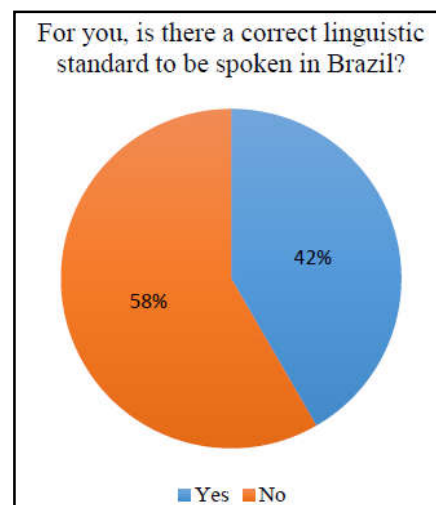


Figure 9. Representative data for question 9 of the questionnaire

Of the situations presented by the informants of this study, some stand out, such as:

19 - *We are an immense country, diversity of culture, creeds and peoples. It is impossible to expect linguistic homogeneity from our people.*

2 - *I would answer: "maybe", this is because the Portuguese language varies according to place, but in Brazil we do not speak Portuguese, we speak Brazilian.*

8 - *Although the official languages are the same I believe that each country uses a correct grammatical standard to be used and Brazil is one of them.*

Most of the justifications show similar points of view. Informants are aware that with the diversity presented in the country, there is no way that all individuals present the same form of language. In the opinion of the informants, the predominant linguistic variants in each location meet the

linguistic needs of that people, except for the informant 8 who believes that the grammatical norms should be strictly followed. For Bagno (2012) it is the most literate urban elites who dictate what is right or wrong, not only in terms of language, but also in all behaviors, beliefs, and tastes and so on. About the norm cult, the mentioned author emphasizes that:

It is the prejudice that there is only one "right" way to speak the language, and that it would be that set of rules and precepts that appears printed in books called grammars. In turn, these grammars are supposed to be based on a peculiar type of linguistic activity - exclusively written - of a very special and select group of citizens, the great stylists of the language, who are also often called "the classics". Inspired by the uses that appear in great literary works, especially in the past, the grammarians try to preserve these uses by composing with them a model of language, a standard to be observed by any and every speaker who wishes to use the language in a "correct", "civilized", "elegant" manner, etc. This model traditionally receives the name of cultured standard (BAGNO, p.21, 2012).

The last question of the data collection instrumental consisted in the question: if you suffer or have suffered some kind of linguistic prejudice at UNILAB, how does this affect you or has it affected you in-group socialization and in the academic process? Among others, the informants cited the following statements:

13 - *I did not suffer, but if I did, I would feel embarrassed to speak in public.*

7 - *Emotionally it has caused me sadness, but at the same time, I try to understand why people tend to behave in this way.*

6 - *It is embarrassing to talk to someone and in the end when the person is finished he says he does not understand what the other person has said, even though he has used all the legal and accent grammatical rules. Just because I am a foreigner. Brazilians think that all Africans have learned Portuguese here in Brazil. They do not know that the African countries that are part of Unilab have Portuguese as an official language in their countries of origin. It is bad...*

1 - *Yes, I did, because of some accent and difficulty in interpreting and understanding the language.*

18 - *I have never suffered linguistic prejudice.*

According to the analysis of the information provided by the informants, it is noticed that, in a certain way, the linguistic prejudice affects the life of those who go through this moment of profound embarrassment. Moreover, that although the existence of this type of prejudice is ignored by society, it is present in the most varied spaces of coexistence, whether in educational institutions, in the cycles of friendships or at work. It is therefore necessary to build a tolerant society towards the diversity of its people.

Conclusions

According to data obtained in this study, it is found that although much of society ignores linguistic prejudice, it is widely viewed both in academic space and outside it. It was verified that approximately 70% of Unilab university students

go through or have already gone through situations that can be considered linguistic prejudice. We have also we found that for some, living with certain types of constraints caused by this type of prejudice, has become common practice in everyday life. The explanation for this is that certain myths about linguistic prejudice, so much being repeated by the elitist classes, have become a truth that has been perpetuating itself over the years and passing from generation to generation. Such generations often do not know what this prejudice is, a factor that makes it increasingly difficult to extinguish. It is noteworthy that the misinformation on the part of speakers of the various linguistic variations used in Brazil and in several other countries, such as the African countries of Portuguese official language, contemplated in this study, ends up causing people to discredit their own way of speaking, their accents and dialects. Thus, being ashamed of their origin, of their culture and not to be socially excluded, they try to fit into the linguistic standards that society imposes. It is noteworthy that giving up its natural origin of speech will only make the linguistic prejudice even stronger and more widespread in society, it is therefore necessary to build a society tolerant of diversity, that there is mutual respect regardless of the way each person has to speak.

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