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**How English came to be Brazil's second language**

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## **Abstract**

This paper will look on the events that let Brazil, a country with more than two hundred million people, to adopt a language that has never been directly influenced before over its five hundred years of history. Brazil has had many periods of mass migration, but it has never held an Anglo-Saxon flood of immigrants. This paper will also present in details the reasons and influences that led this gigantic country to choose English as its second language.

## **Introduction**

The fall of the English Empire and the rising of the American Empire the education systems around the world had to adapt to the reality that the people were eager and willing to participate in all the decisions that pertain their well being, and to do so, they need to interact with others and the language of the posthumous super power was the same language of the new one. English became the greatest symbol for this era. The biggest change of all came when Latin and French became optional in schools' curriculums around the world and English became mandatory. This is one change that came through people's perception of the world and what it was necessary for their children to know so they could have a brighter future in a global society.

A very vividly example of this change in the Western World can be seen in the educational system of Brazil. This paper will analyze in depth the changes that occurred in its school curriculums as well as in its society and the world around it. Brazil is the only speaking Portuguese land in the Americas, it is surrounded by four other European languages Spanish, Dutch, English and French. This uniqueness has made Portuguese intrinsically part of the Brazilian identity. Portuguese didn't unite the country's people, but it was clear from the start that if a person wanted to be part of society and wanted to thrive, such person would have to speak Portuguese. It was, and it is a similar situation in its neighbors in South America and with its northern American allies. This paper will show how European migrants to the new world had to adapt to the new country's language and how its decedents are now learning the new Lingua Franca, English.

## **The Brazilian identity**

Portuguese is the official language of Brazil and is widely spoken by most of population. Brazilian Sign Language is also an official language. Minority languages include indigenous languages and languages of more recent European and Asian immigrants. The population speaks or signs approximately 210 languages, of which 180 are indigenous. Less than forty thousand people speak any one of the indigenous languages in the Brazilian territory. Its main languages are Portuguese with 99.9%, Pomeran with 1.9% and various Indigenous languages that total 1.0% such as Apalaí, Arára, Bororo, Canela, Carajá, Carib, Guarani, Kaingang, Nadëb, Nheengatu, Pirahã, Terena, Tucano, Tupiniquim, Ye'kuana [1]

Language is one of the strongest elements of Brazil's national unity. There are only groups, and pockets of immigrants who maintain their heritage languages. Within Brazil, there is no major dialect variation of the Portuguese, only moderate regional variation in accent, vocabulary, and use of personal nouns, pronouns, and verb conjugations. Variations are diminishing because of mass media, especially national television networks that are viewed by the majority of the population.

Brazil has now 205,000,000 people, 5% of its population can speak English and only 3% have fluency in the language. This may seem like low numbers but given the remoteness of South America to any other English-speaking country and taking to account that the country only started teaching English in mid-1960's these numbers are not so bad. There is a Sweden that speaks English in Brazil. But if we analyze these numbers another way could ask "Why 95% of Brazilians do not speak English?". We can treat these numbers as shameful and then try to understand it. According to a survey conducted recently by the Research Institute Popular Data, young people aged 18-24, only 10.3% say they have some knowledge of English; among the 25-34 age group, this number drops to 5.2% and between the 35-50 age group, the rate drops to 3.5%. These numbers make it clear that within time the numbers shall be improved, as it has happened in so many other countries that have lower population than Brazil. [2]

## **Brazil in the end of the XIX century**

The main social linguistic fact of all the changes that occur in the Americas is that for the first time the second language taught in schools is not the one that is part of the people's heritage. When most German, Italian, Spanish and French immigrants' settlers arrived in the Americas they were taught the national language (even if English is not considering the official language of the United States) and in some schools the students were given the opportunity to learn their parents or grandparent's language. This happened in the end of the XIX century and with the turbulent beginning of the XX century it became clear that the world was changing. The French couldn't sustain their influence anymore and the British Empire with its mighty power and influence collapsed after the First World War and with its collapse it became clear that the Americas were now only influenced by the politics, trade and cultural influence of the United States.

Brazil is the biggest country in Latin America, but it is not a great influence in its neighbors and in the world. It has always kept itself within, in its history Brazil had only once influence the politics of its neighbors, during the Paraguayan War 1864 to 1870, when the country was ruled by the emperor Don Pedro II. In the beginning of the XX century Brazil was already a thriving republic and its assertion to the world stage was minimum. It helped the allies in both world wars but with a much smaller role than the ones that Canada and the United States played. These facts illustrate how close Brazil is to the world and it also says much about how Portuguese came to be so embraced and vital to Brazilians.

## **The situation in Brazil and around the world in the beginning of the XX century**

Brazil achieved independence in 1822. Until the 20th century, it was a large rural nation with low social and economic standards comparing to the average North American and European standards. Its economy was based on the primary sector, possessing an unskilled and increasingly larger workforce, composed of free people (including slave owners) and slaves or their direct descendants. Among the first law schools founded in Brazil were the ones in Recife and São Paulo in 1827. But for decades to come, most Brazilian lawyers studied at European universities, such as in the ancient University of Coimbra, in Portugal, which had awarded degrees to generations of Brazilian students since the 16th century.

In 1872 there were 9,930,478 inhabitants (84.8% free and 15.2% slave). According to the national census made in this year, among the free inhabitants (8,419,672 people), 38% were white, 39% mulattoes (white and black mix), 11% black and 5% caboclos (white and Indian mix). Only 23.4% of the free men and 13.4% of the free women could read and write. In 1889, six decades after independence, only 20% of the total population could read and write. In the former colonial power, Portugal, about 80% of the population was classified as illiterate.

With the massive post-war expansion that lasts to date, the government focused on strengthening Brazil's tertiary education, while simultaneously neglecting assistance to primary and secondary education. The problems of primary and secondary education were compounded by significant quality differences across regions, with the northeast suffering dramatically. In the aftermath of Brazilian military rule, education became seen as a way to create a fairer society. "Citizen schools" emerged, designed to promote critical thinking, incorporation of marginalized people, and curiosity (over rote memorization and obedience).

In contrast with many Western countries that had consolidated their schools in the 19th century, so that they became «almost the center of gravity of social life» (Cambi, 1999, p. 381), Brazil which was preeminently agrarian, rural and marked by three hundred years of slavery, entered the 20th century with a seriously backward educational system: in 1900 there was an illiteracy rate of 65.3% (among people over 15 years of age) (Romanelli, 1986, p. 64).

In 1932, in response to the fact that primary schools excluded most children (in particular blacks and poor whites), 26 intellectuals, inspired by the pedagogical theories of John Dewey, launched a Manifesto which claimed that the following principles should be enshrined in a unified school system: schools for every child from the age of seven to

fifteen, State responsibility for full-time education, secular schooling, compulsory attendance and co-educational schools.

The Manifesto which was an expression of liberal pedagogical thinking, stated that «in the hierarchy of national problems, none is more important and serious than the problem of education» (Azevedo et al., 1960, p. 109). By placing education at the forefront of national problems, the liberals of 1932 believed that education was an essential feature in constructing the nation. The movement they began, which was known as the New School, was the most important and influential in the history of education in Brazil in the 20th century and was a rival to the doctrines of the Catholic Church (which was fearful of losing its hegemony in Brazilian education).

These principles had begun to be disseminated in Brazil through the Brazilian Association of Education which was set up in 1924 and became a theoretical and political landmark; this led to a series of debates and exciting ideas, culminating in the publication of the Manifesto in 1932. In fact, the 1920s were as outstanding and forward-looking in the history of Brazil as later, the 1980s would be.

In political terms, the country experienced a dictatorship for eight years (1937-45), which interrupted the debate that had begun in the 1920s. In the context leading up to the Cold War, Brazil returned to democracy (1945-64) and it was at this time that Paulo Freire developed his pedagogical theories which began to provide literacy to adults against a historical background where only a tiny minority of the public attended a school. It is worth remembering that in 1960, 39.35% of the Brazilian population remained illiterate and in Freire's view, schools were elitist in both quantitative and qualitative respects since the booklets used for teaching literacy conveyed values and contained pictures that were completely at variance with the experience of most Brazilian people.

Freire attached importance to education in a society like Brazil that in his view was undergoing a transition from a closed to an open society. This transition from a rural to an urban-industrial society and from a closed society (i.e. characterized by a lack of democratic experience) to an open society, corresponded to the degrees of consciousness of the public. In his opinion, what was taking place in

Brazil was a move from a «magic consciousness» which largely characterized the closed society in a rural environment to a «naive-transitive consciousness», and this was a result of urbanization and industrialization. However, the transition from the naive-transitive consciousness to critical awareness was different since it could not take place automatically but depended on educational work that was geared towards attaining this objective. He believed that it was only this work that could ensure that consciousness could be taken to a critical level. Hence in theoretical terms, Paulo Freire was more



concerned with the levels of awareness of the public than with the structures of society. Regarding improving the literacy of adults, he turned to the process of making the «oppressed» conscious of their role in history. From a political standpoint, the importance of his ideas lies in their radical criticism of the Brazilian elite, which is embedded in the selfishness of its class and is both detached from and above the people. This critical and humanist view derives from a re-interpretation of Christianity in Latin America, the Liberation Theology and the choices available to the poor.

In Brazil, the document known as the “Pioneer Manifesto” of 1932 initiated a cognitive framework for which the federative educational system was planned. Directed toward the people as well the government, the Manifesto was written in a period with the emergence of different sociopolitical projects in the country — authoritarian, totalitarian and liberal (Rocha, 2004) — which included interventions from the State in the nation. The text of the Manifesto starts with a conclusion:

[...] always dissociated from the economic and educational reforms, all our efforts including a plan of unity and a spirit of continuity, have not yet succeeded in creating a system of school organization that is in keeping with modern needs and the needs of the country (Manifesto..., 2006, p. 188, our emphasis)

Next, the document advocates for the people’s access to school education, in agrees with the extension of the school system across the whole territory of the country. Almost 80 years after the publication of the Manifesto, the final document from the National Education Conference (CONAE) (Brazil, 2010a) restates the terms related to the incompleteness of the national education system, in support of an educational reform project and normative planning — The National Education Plan Law (Plano Nacional de Educação — PNE).

Reading the Pioneer Manifesto of New Education nowadays involves perceiving the Manifesto as a political piece from an educational debate situated at the beginning of the 1930s. It shows the groups in dispute and the movement, operated by the text, of re-signification of educational proposals and objects in confrontation with the explicit purpose of guiding the educational policies of the new Ministry of Education and Health. Similarly, it is also important to understand the Manifesto as a monument of Brazilian Educational Memory; [...] The Manifesto has survived as a letter of pedagogic principle, as the foundation of a renewed school, mainly to defend the responsibility of the State in the diffusion of Brazilian public education throughout the country. (Vidal, 2013, p. 586)

Considering the analytic hypothesis of this study, the 1932 document shows the terms of political commitment affirmed among the liberals and authoritarians in defense of the responsibility of the State to work on public education in the country. The document has

guided formulations, which were made in later periods, about the planning of the national educational system. From a sociological point of view, there was no national education system which has explored the dichotomy between the exigency made for social-economic development and the institutions of the modern State, as well the inadequate cultural formation of Brazilian society. The text of the Manifesto legitimated a systematic, normative and centralized planning, based on science as the motor for reform in the country's educational system.

[...] it is obviously up to the State to organize the means of making it effective, by way of a general plan of education, of an organic structure, that makes school accessible to all citizens [...] and we must seek the means to carry out, throughout the Republic, a methodical and coordinated effort, according to a common plan, of complete efficiency, both in intensity and in extent. (Manifesto..., 2006, p. 193)

And this plan yet to be formulated, will articulate the institutions that form people into a new nation. The discursive construction of the Manifesto deals with the terms "national", "nationality" and "national" plural in thirteen situations. For the educators who signed the document, the most important national problem was education, and this required reconstruction on a national level that would be driven by the national movement of educators, of which they were a part. In the document, the recognition of the diversities of regional interests is superimposed on a single organization of education under the bases and principles of the State and this, in turn, is always demonstrated by the use of the term in the singular. By employing the terms "State" and "National", the document geared toward the people and to nation, is an *ex ante*, that is, a given and objective social fact, and not a socio-politic construction. In this plan, the way of inciting action from the states and from the nation is through retaining them as homogenic unities. For the authoritarians and liberals from that time, the intellectuals, legitimated by scientific knowledge (which came especially from sociology and psychology) predicted the destinies of the people and consequently, the nation:

They are ideas, ones that endure and that hurt, at least, the face of a "single school" problem. The issue is opportune for us if we think about organizing education from the State, and we cannot do it without examining all these debatable problems. (Teixeira, 1924, our emphasis)

Pagni (2000), in revising the literature about the production process of the 1932 Manifesto, points out that both "modern mentality" and "traditional mentality" came from a common problem: the so-called era of human and spiritual values crisis. For Brazilian educators, the signers of the Manifesto of the first half of the 1930s, the educational system under the protection of the State (central) should produce citizens who have

internalized values and practices that are necessary for the development/modernization/industrialization of the nation. The educational people's education for the development of a nation.

## **The Cold War and the dictatorships in Brazil and around it.**

“The slogan 'we will not allow another Cuba' hides the possibility of perpetrating aggressions without fear of reprisal, such as the one carried out against the Dominican Republic or before that the massacre in Panama – and the clear warning stating that Yankee troops are ready to intervene anywhere in America where the ruling regime may be altered, thus endangering their interests.”

— Che Guevara, April 16, 1967

The 1959 Cuban Revolution, headed by Fidel Castro, was one of the first defeats of the US foreign policy in Latin America. In 1961, Cuba became a member of the newly created Non-Aligned Movement, which succeeded the 1955 Bandung Conference. After the implementation of several economic reforms, including complete nationalizations by Cuba's government, US trade restrictions on Cuba increased. The U.S. halted Cuban sugar imports, on which Cuba's economy depended the most. Additionally, the U.S. refused to supply its former trading partner with much needed oil, creating a devastating effect on the island's economy. In March 1960, tensions increased when the freighter La Coubre exploded in Havana harbor, killing over 75 people. Fidel Castro blamed the United States and compared the incident to the 1898 sinking of the USS Maine, which had precipitated the Spanish–American War; he could provide no evidence for his accusation. That same month, President Dwight D. Eisenhower authorized the CIA to organize, train and equip Cuban refugees as a guerrilla force to overthrow Castro, which would lead to the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion authorized by president John F. Kennedy.

Every time the Cuban government nationalized US properties, the US government took countermeasures, resulting in the prohibition of all exports to Cuba on October 19, 1960. Consequently, Cuba began to consolidate trade relations with the Soviet Union, leading the US to break off all remaining official diplomatic relations.

The nuclear arms race brought the two superpowers to the brink of nuclear war. In 1962, President John F. Kennedy responded to the installation of nuclear missiles in Cuba with a naval blockade—a show of force that brought the world close to nuclear war. The Cuban Missile Crisis showed that neither superpower was ready to use nuclear weapons for fear of the other's retaliation, and thus of mutually assured destruction. The aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis led to the first efforts toward nuclear disarmament and improving relations.

By 1964, under President Lyndon Johnson, the program to discriminate against dictatorial regimes ceased. In March 1964, the U.S. supported a military coup in Brazil,

overthrowing left-wing president, João Goulart, and was prepared to help if called upon under Operation Brother Sam. In 1965, the U.S. dispatched 24,000 soldiers to the Dominican Republic to prevent a possible left-wing takeover under Operation Power Pack. Earlier the OAS issued a resolution calling the combatants to end all hostilities. On May 5, the OAS Peace Committee arrived in Santo Domingo and a second definite cease fire agreement was signed, ending the main phase of the civil war. Under the Act of Santo Domingo, OAS was tasked with overseeing the implementation of the peace deal as well as distributing food and medication through the capital. The treaties failed to fully prevent violations such as small-scale firefights and sniper fire. A day later, OAS members established the Inter-American Peace Force (IAPF) with the goal of serving as a peacekeeping formation in the Dominican Republic. IAPF consisted of 1,748 Brazilian, Paraguayan, Nicaraguan, Costa Rican, Salvadoran and Honduran troops and was headed by Brazilian general Hugo Panasco Alvim, with Bruce Palmer serving as his deputy commander.

Following the 1959 Cuban Revolution and the local implementation in several countries of Che Guevara's focus theory, the US waged a war in South America against what it called "Communist subversives", leading to support of coups against democratically elected presidents such as the backing of the Chilean right wing, which would culminate with Augusto Pinochet's 1973 Chilean coup against democratically-elected Salvador Allende. By 1976, all South America was covered by similar military dictatorships, called juntas. In Paraguay, Alfredo Stroessner had been in power since 1954; in Brazil, left-wing President João Goulart was overthrown by a military coup in 1964 with the assistance of the US in what was known as Operation Brother Sam; in Bolivia, General Hugo Banzer overthrew leftist General Juan José Torres in 1971; in Uruguay, considered the "Switzerland" of South America, Juan María Bordaberry seized power in the 27 June 1973 coup. In Peru, leftist General Velasco Alvarado in power since 1968, planned to use the recently empowered Peruvian military to overwhelm Chilean armed forces in a planned invasion of Pinochetist Chile. A "Dirty War" was waged all over the subcontinent, culminating with Operation Condor, an agreement between security services of the Southern Cone and other South American countries to repress and assassinate political opponents, which was backed by the US government.

The 1964 Brazilian coup d'état was a series of events in Brazil from March 31 to April 1 that led to the overthrow of President João Goulart by members of the Brazilian Armed Forces, supported by the United States government. The following day, with the military already in control of the country, the Brazilian Congress came out in support of the coup and endorsed it by declaring vacant the office of the presidency. The coup put an end to the government of Goulart, also known as Jango, a member of the Brazilian Labour

Party, who had been democratically elected Vice President in the same election in which conservative Jânio Quadros, from the National Labor Party and backed by the National Democratic Union, won the presidency.

Quadros resigned in 1961, the same year of his inauguration, in a clumsy political maneuver to increase his popularity. Quadros anticipated that mass demonstrations would demand his return to office and strengthen his position, but he miscalculated. With the presidency vacate and according to the constitution then in force, enacted in 1946, Quadros should have automatically been replaced by Goulart. However, because Goulart was on a diplomatic trip to the People's Republic of China at the time, and because, although a moderate nationalist, Goulart was accused of being a communist by right-wing militants, he was unable to take office. After long negotiations, led mainly by Tancredo Neves, Goulart's supporters and the right-wing reached an agreement under which the parliamentary system would replace the presidential system in the country. Goulart would continue as head of state, although weakened, and Neves would be named prime minister.

In 1963, however, a referendum re-established the presidential system with Goulart as president. He took office with full powers, and during his rule several problems in Brazilian politics became evident, as well as disputes in the context of the Cold War, which helped destabilize his government. The Basic Reforms Plan (Reformas de Base) proposed by Goulart had the potential to socialize the profits of large companies to ensure a better quality of life for most Brazilians, but was labelled as a "socialist threat" by right-wing sectors of society and of the military, which organized major demonstrations against the government in the Marches of the Family with God for Freedom (Marchas da Família com Deus pela Liberdade).

The coup brought to Brazil a military regime politically aligned to the interests of the United States government. This regime lasted until 1985, when Tancredo Neves was indirectly elected the first civilian president of Brazil since the 1960 elections.

Jânio Quadros resigned on August 25, 1961. At the time of his resignation, João Goulart was in the People's Republic of China on a foreign relations trip. On August 29, the Brazilian Congress heard and vetoed a motion to stop Goulart from being named president, brought by the heads of the three branches of the military and some politicians, who claimed Goulart's inauguration would put the country "on the road to civil war". A compromise was reached: Brazil would become a parliamentary democracy, with Goulart as president. As such, he would be head of state, but with limited powers of head of government. Tancredo Neves was named as the new prime minister. On January 6, 1963, Goulart successfully changed the system of government back to presidential

democracy in a referendum he won by a large margin. Goulart found himself back in power with a rapidly deteriorating political and economic situation. During this period, Goulart was politically isolated, with a foreign policy which was independent of any alignment. He openly criticized the Bay of Pigs invasion by the US but criticized the Cuban regime of Fidel Castro during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The country's economic situation deteriorated rapidly. Attempts to stabilize the currency were financed by aid packages from the International Monetary Fund. His failure to secure foreign investment and curb domestic inflation put the country in a difficult situation which exacerbated social conflicts. On March 13, 1964, Goulart gave a speech where he promised to nationalize the country's oil refineries, as well as carry out "basic reforms" including rent control. This was followed by a large demonstration on March 19, where a conservative group marched on Praça da Sé, São Paulo, in a demonstration called "March of the Family with God for Freedom" against Goulart and his policies.

Operation Brother Sam was the codename given to Kennedy's plan to "prevent Brazil from becoming another China or Cuba". Kennedy believed Goulart was getting too friendly with anti-American radicals in the Brazilian government. Declassified transcripts of communications between Lincoln Gordon and the US government show that, predicting an all-out civil war, and with the opportunity to get rid of a left-wing government in Brazil, Johnson authorized logistical materials to be in place and a US Navy fleet led by an aircraft carrier to support the coup against Goulart. These included ammunition, motor oil, gasoline, aviation gasoline and other materials to help in a potential civil war in US Navy tankers sailing from Aruba. About 110 tons of ammunition and CS gas were made ready in New Jersey for a potential airlift to Viracopos Airport in Campinas. Potential support was also made available in the form of an "aircraft carrier (USS Forrestal) and two guided missile destroyers (expected arrive in area by April 10), (and) four destroyers", which sailed to Brazil under the guise of a military exercise.

The dictatorship period reproduced, among the actors who planned the Brazilian educational system, the cognitive framework in which the regulation carried out. Those considered to be notorious bearers of knowledge were intended to make educational reforms and plan the structure and functioning of the educational system, which was the mold of people fit for the nation. However, in this period, disjoined from struggles and repressed social movements, technocrats (Ianni, 1971) planned reforms/plans of the educational system for the whole nation. This was conceived as a territory devoid of social individuals that were necessary for the social and economic development intended by the groups organizing the coup.

In the educational field, the Latin American Studies Center from Michigan State University edited in 1972, *Toward a theory of education planning: the case of Brazil*

(Mendes, 1972). In the article, Mendes exposes the unfolding of the planning principle set out in the 1932 Manifesto and the socio-philosophic foundations that should underpin the new proposal for educational planning during the dictatorship period. Mendes (2000), by means of a rigorous survey of the main changes that occurred in the politics and administration of education in the country, reveals the struggles between those who, because they consider themselves legitimized by knowledge, planned the educational system for the people. For the objectives of this study, it is worth emphasizing two aspects: the recognition of the strategy adopted by educators during the dictatorship, when they were dislodged from the planning by technocrats and “transformed the law into their citadel” (Mendes, 2000, p. 43) and the obliteration in the period, of the size and possible meanings attributed to the term “national” in the constitution of a federal educational system. Mendes (2000, p. 191) concludes:

The Federal Government is supposed to give a certain form to the system, which effectively, is embodied in the states and in autonomous institutions. The form is confused with the national character of educational policy and with the project that makes it dynamic. One may say that what is specific to the federal education system is the conversion of federal into national. This national form also has its content that, however, is expressed overall, as norms and guidelines.

The emphasis placed in the dictatorial period on normative and strategic planning (Vieira and Albuquerque, 2001), when associative life itself was subordinated to the State, was made simultaneously with the maintenance of the patronage way of exercising policies of the municipal/state oligarchy. In Brazil, if the so-called strategic and nominative educational system planning promoted actions that fostered the emergence of a bureaucratic-professional regulation mode (Maroy, 2011), these actions were articulated in the keeping of patronage practices. In this educational system, the nominative prescription dealing with the whole country established the necessary bases for the formation of new elites and, simultaneously defined guidelines to be observed by other actors present in the educational system. However, the logic of action based on “favors” coexisted with the proliferation of normative prescriptions about the administration of basic education and promoted formal aspects of educational management as mechanisms of distribution and control of social positions.

In 1970, Brazil had a population of 94,501,554 inhabitants and the rate of illiteracy was 33.1% (Romanelli, 1986, p. 64). Primary schools continued to be for the minority and secondary education was confined to the elite. In quantitative terms, there was an expansion of Brazilian public schools with the reforms of 1971 which extended compulsory education from four to eight years. This was as an essential factor in ensuring that Brazil could become, in the military jargon of the time, «a great power».



However, this expansion was not accompanied by the conditions necessary for learning and since then, the picture of public schools in Brazil has been one of dilapidated buildings, overcrowded classrooms, teaching separated into morning and afternoon sessions, and low salaries for teachers. In addition, the leaders of the military dictatorship failed to solve the problem of illiteracy.

It was during this period that English came to the classrooms of the country. French became optional and the new language became mandatory. Here are the testimonies of two Brazilians that went through this change:

“In the 1960s, French still dominated the world as the most widely spoken language. As a child, I took French classes for 2 years in middle school. I still remember Professor Joaquim. Weird name for a French teacher I know. But an excellent teacher. *Jé suis Pedro .... comant le vous?* I remember a gray, expensive book I bought secondhand to study. At that time English was introduced into the school curriculum. I had two final years at the gym with English. I did not like it much then. French is more elegant and beautiful to hear. But unfortunately, it disappeared as a world language ...”

Pedro Ernesto,  
Brazilian born in 1957

“In the years 1969 (at the time of the 1st grade of the junior high school), I began learning a foreign language in the 1st. grade - French, which extended until the 2nd. grade. I have few memories. I liked his classes and got good grades. I do remember the teacher of the 1st. grade Mademoiselle Antoinette, of the 2nd., was young, tall, with long brown hair, almost always trapped, usually in cokes. The book was the same for both years. A dark green coverlet booklet with black and white illustrations. At the end it had lyrics of songs, that were also developed in the discipline of Music, with professor Lourdes. To this day I remember them. I would like to remember the name and the author of the book. I searched for the fat, but I did not find it.”

Selma Antunes Rubino,  
Brazilian born in 1957

The debate centered on the educational scene in Brazil at the end of the military dictatorship when the new civilian government exerted an influence on the curriculum and in teacher-training courses. At the same time, the curriculum continued to attach importance to educational reforms. This was because democratic governments have introduced further new reforms in recent years, they have failed to fulfil their basic goals

by providing universal education for a continuous period of eight years. Evidence for this is provided by government assessments which show that after eight years of compulsory schooling, many Brazilian children leave school without an ability to employ their native language. In addition, secondary schools are far from being available to everyone, literacy is still a lost cause and the teaching profession has ceased to be as attractive and prestigious as it was up to the 1960s.

In a period of approximately thirty years between the 1950s and the end of the 1970s, deep social changes occurred in Brazil. A democratic interval from 1946 to 1964, followed by a dictatorial period, which ended after twenty years, caused intense migration and social disengagement in the country (Domingues, 2009), which disseminated values related to the construction of equality for the people, giving them civil, political, and social rights. According to this author, the depletion of the economic policy model centered on national developmentalist protectionism in the late 1970s, put in check the role of the state as the agent responsible for attributing individuals and collectives to their place in social life. At the end of this period, the country started to face the fact that more than half of its population was living in urban centers, where a more passive and subordinated “demos” was substituted by more free individuals (disengaged), who had several ways of organizing. The people who made up the nation had risen.

Domingues (2009) characterized the period between the 1940s and the 1980s as state-oriented modernization, where nationality and citizenship were the main institutions. However, in Brazil, as well as in the rest Latin America, these institutions were made with barriers imposed by the strongly hierarchic and unequal social relations. Indeed, the increased presence of the State in Brazilian social life during this period meant that the controlled expansion of the educational system was a way of incorporating the people into the nation/State, giving them differentiated and unequal educational paths. The planning of a national educational system, which was based on knowledge and methods considered to be “scientific,” and created mainly by educators and/or technocrats, constituted the foundation of an educational reform of the people for a new nation.

The history of the Brazilian education from the issuing of the Manifesto in 1932 until the end of the 20th century, was characterized by a disparity between the debate and the formation of a national system of education. It can be said that the unacknowledged but growing weakness of the public educational system throughout the 20th century, was in striking contrast with the debates and clamorous ideological disputes that were constantly being heard in pedagogical quarters, or with the pressure on the State expressed in demands that education should be provided for everyone. [4]

## **The current situation in Brazil and in the world**

English is the most widely spoken language of the world because of the power the United States in economic and politic. English is the mother tongue of 380 million people, and it is used worldwide by the newspapers, magazines, scientists, businessmen, and politicians. One billion to 1.5 billion people around the world presently speak English. It is the most widely language in 70 countries (J. Draper. 1994). Globalization at the end of the twentieth century is occurring through the media, and technology, thus affecting languages worldwide (Sebesta, 1996). [6]

Brazilians understand the importance of the English language and many surveys have shown that. One survey conducted by Catho, a job search site, says that mastery of a foreign language can increase paycheck by up to 52%. Contrary to what many people imagine, the problem is not only in people of lower positions.

Of Berlitz's 4,000 students, English school, for example, 30% are presidents and directors and 60% are middle management - the clear majority at the entry level. In the direction and in the presidency, only a third is already considered advanced. "Not speaking English is a deterrent to career growth. In a globalized world, language is of the utmost importance", says Magui Castro, a partner at Caldwell Partners in Brazil, a consulting firm in São Paulo. Without proficiency, professionals are stagnant in multinational companies-that's when they get through the selection process. "Even in nationals, they only reach a medium level, because to go up one has to go to international meetings and congresses," says Magui. And companies can not afford to have an executive who does not express himself in English - especially in times of lean and efficient teams.

English proficiency among Brazilians is so low that the country ranks 41st in a ranking of 70 countries developed by EF Education First. The education company measured the proficiency of 910,000 adults worldwide (who do not speak English as a native language) in terms of grammar, vocabulary, reading and comprehension. First placed on the list are Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark. Brazil appears behind countries like Singapore, Peru, Ecuador, Mexico and Chile. "Technically, the difficulty level of learning English for a Brazilian is considered easy by linguists," says Arthur Bezerra, Berlitz's country manager in Brazil.

Of course, age is heavy. The younger the student is, the easier it will be. But the number of people who are willing to take a language course - either for lack of time or money - is still small. For Arthur, time is one of the explanations (or excuse) for the difficulty that Brazilians must learn English, but not the only one. According to him, the way we are taught hinders learning. "Many courses use outdated methodologies designed to train

English teachers rather than communicators," says Arthur. "Most people can go to Disney and even do a job interview, but when it comes to getting into a debate, they get lost." This shortcoming is evident in job interviews in English, something common among recruiters. Magui says that he has interviewed several intelligent and excellent executives in their functions, but who only know how to "turn around" in English. "When one of them needs to dig deep into a conversation in the language, he uses short sentences because he has limited vocabulary and gives the impression to the interviewer that he does not have as much content as he has," says Magui. "That does him a lot of harm. For, as they say, 'perception is reality'".

Aware of the losses that the lack of a second language causes in the career, many Brazilians are chasing after the loss and increasing enrollment in specialized schools. The Yes! Language network, for example, had a 15% increase in the number of students interested in English classes in the first half of 2015. "Sporadically, we received students who lost some job opportunity because they did not have knowledge in a second language, like English or Spanish, the most requested in the interviews ", says Clodoaldo Nascimento, president of Yes!. Its competitor, EF Englishtown, had a 20% increase in demand in 2015.

Language is so important that a survey by Robert Half, in partnership with Education First, found that for 80% of the 100 HR directors interviewed, fluency in English is essential to take on exponential positions. But of that total, only 7% said they would reimburse the expenses of those who study. This is the case of Rehau, a German-based company specialized in furniture design and construction, based in São Paulo, where Gabriela Lopes, a 30-year marketing and product analyst, works. Three years ago, she started studying English in Cultura Inglesa, thanks to the boss's encouragement and the company's cost aid, which accounts for 50% of the course's value. "I've always found it important, but now I have more need because I participate in trainings with staff from the United States and Germany, as well as communicate a lot by email in the language," says Gabriela, who dreams of a professional exchange in the next few years. In addition to the course, she tries to watch movies and series without subtitles and listen to songs in English. "I watch the Revenge series and read a lot of material from my post in the language," he says.

The bottom line is not only to take classes to understand the language (or to recycle if you have learned a long time and it is rusty), it is to lose the fear of speaking in public. In the market, there is not much room for "gringophobia". Having the courage to perform in the language, even apologizing for not yet being fluent, causes the professional to earn points. "Often people are terrified that they are not fluent and fail to learn the essentials. Practice helps build confidence, just like any other skill, but people who are afraid to

practice because they do not speak as fluently as they like are blocked and do not develop, "says Camila Pires, coach and executive director of Rede Indigo in Rio de Janeiro. [6]

Today, Brazil struggles to improve the public education offered at earlier stages and maintain the high standards that the population has come to expect from public universities. The choice on public funding is an issue. The U.N. Development Goal of Universal Primary Education and a larger offer of education for students with special needs are pursued by Brazilian policy-makers.

Despite its shortcomings, Brazil has progressed substantially since the 1980s. The nation witnessed an increase in school enrollment for children age 7–14, from 80.9% in 1980 to 96.4% in the year 2000. In the 15-17 age demographic, in the same period, this rate rose from 49.7% to 83%. Literacy rates rose from 75% to 90.0%.

## **Conclusion**

Brazil has come a long and hard way. The country still has a lot to do to become an important participant in international affairs and English is going to be a major part of it. The world is in a much better situation now compare to XX century. Stability and trade are at its highest, but Brazil is only responsible for less than 3% of the world's trade.

The world's school systems are now more integrate than ever, a good proof of that is that the Brazilian curriculum is accept in most countries of the world. As a Brazilian I'm proud of what came to be now my country, a democratic state that tries its best to achieve something that only some European countries have. It is a long journey until we have numbers like in Germany, but I have a good feeling that we will get there.

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