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Addressing the Past, Embracing the Future: An Analysis of How Historic Inequality has Created Current Obstacles to Learning English in Brazil and a Proposal for a New Community-Based Approach

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Addressing the past, embracing the future:
An analysis of how historic inequality has created current obstacles to
learning English in Brazil and a proposal for a new community-based approach

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts in TESOL degree
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Abstract

This paper contextualizes current challenges to English learning in Brazil within the educational history of the country. It explores the ways in which language, both native literacy and foreign, has been used to set apart and advantage the elite class, while educational policy and approaches have served to pacify and control the majority. This history has left psychological, cultural, and economic legacies which inhibit learning today. Nevertheless, modern globalization is placing increasing pressure on Brazilians to achieve fluency in English and other languages. This paper briefly outlines the new and complex intellectual and social skills needed to participate in a global world, which have not been developed by authoritarian approaches to education, as well as how the development of English as an International Language (EIL) provides a solution to the identity conflict caused by an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) perspective. With this historic and modern context as the background, this paper describes the importance of English in the ecotourism destination of Bonito, Brazil and outlines a new approach to English learning that seeks to address the challenges previously discussed here and engage learners actively in the process of language learning.

Keywords: Brazil, English as an International Language (EIL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), education, class, power, identity, experiential learning, globalization

ERIC Descriptors:

English (International Language)

English (Foreign Language)

Experiential Learning

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Addressing the past, embracing the future:

An analysis of how historic inequality has created current obstacles to learning English in Brazil and a proposal for a new community-based approach

Since moving to Brazil from the United States in 2009, I have taught English to adults with a variety of motivations for learning the language and in a variety of settings. In one of the country's larger cities I worked with managers and executives of multinational corporations who used English in internal communication as well as with international clients. I also worked with entrepreneurs for whom globalization is offering new opportunities. I then worked in-company at a rural agricultural cooperative which trades grains and grain-based products with countries as diverse as Germany, the United States and China. Finally, in the small ecotourism destination of Bonito, I primarily work with people engaged in the tourism sector, however other students have included English teachers in the public schools and teenagers preparing for university entrance.

Across vast differences in age, educational level, professional goals, life experiences, and even language proficiency, I have noticed similar challenges. Most of my students seem to approach learning with a strong sense of pressure or "need" to learn English, anxiety because of this pressure, and trepidation, with desire often buried deep below the surface. To a certain extent, this is simply a factor of the learning process. However, it is also clearly a result of the pressures that globalization is putting on Brazilians to gain necessary skills required for participation in the global market.

Added to this pressure are other challenges. Students often seem to lack understanding of what it takes to actually learn a language, leading them to start studying with unrealistically high expectations for themselves and for English study courses. English school marketing efforts both cater to this and exacerbate it by making absurd offers such as “English in Six Months!” for non-immersion programs. This is inevitably followed by frustration and loss of motivation when students follow a course of study and do not achieve their incredibly high goals in the span of time allotted.

When following a course of study, students often depend solely on that particular method and on the classes and the teacher. Both because of genuine time constraints and because they often do not know how to study outside of class, students expect the course and classes to provide them with everything they need to learn the language within the allotted class time and regardless of absences. When this leads to failure, students may blame themselves and quit, or they may blame the teacher or the course and seek out a different option.

This cycle is not only failing students, it is failing teachers. It puts incredible pressure on teachers to “insert” as much English as possible into the heads of students in an impossibly short period of time. Teachers too are set up for failure because language proficiency simply does not result from methods that treat the language as a subject to be memorized.

Just as in the rest of the world, there are signs of innovation in education in Brazil. There is a sense that the rote and regimented traditional approach is not serving learners. However, efforts to change education remain isolated or hampered by lack of

funding, and have not yet resulted in widespread change in people's assumptions about and expectations for education. In part, I believe innovation is being held back by current political and economic realities which are based in centuries of extreme inequality and class division. On the other hand, I believe one of the legacies of centuries of class control within the country combined with imperialist meddling from outside is a set of beliefs about education and learning which keep learners searching for easy and utilitarian solutions rather than engaging deeply with a learning process which both requires and builds critical-thinking, creativity, curiosity, and risk-taking. This simultaneously holds learners back from gaining the English proficiency they seek and prevents them from identifying and working for the systemic cultural, political and economic changes that would make education effective.

Nevertheless, under the surface of frustration, anxiety and urgency, I have repeatedly seen an intense desire for an approach to language that is more effective and more human. Over and over I have seen confusion turn to excitement as I explain that I will no longer be teaching extensive classes, but instead intend to focus on helping people become more independent and engaged in the learning process.

I believe that learners in Bonito need a new approach to learning English which addresses individual time and financial constraints while responding to and operating outside of (as much as possible) the controls imposed by the larger political and economic realities. It must also address the limiting beliefs that hold learners back, in order to prepare them not only to speak English but also to fully engage with the opportunities and challenges presented by globalization.

In this paper I will describe the historical factors which have created both tangible inequalities in access to English education and the limiting beliefs about English and learning which I believe have kept English proficiency very low. I will then describe the change in skills demanded by globalization; skills which both public education and private language institutes are currently ineffective at developing. I will also describe how the growth of English as an International Language (EIL) resolves both practical and identity-based issues associated with the continued use of an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) perspective. Finally, I will describe the particular factors which affect English learning in the context of Bonito, and outline a new community-based approach to teaching and learning languages which I hope will make English more accessible while building a new culture around learning and developing learners' ability to take charge of and engage deeply with the learning process.

The Expansion of Education in Brazil

In Latin America ... control over language, the more ornate the better, had marked a man as a legitimate wielder of power since the nineteenth century. Many historians have focused on the ways in which public education served as a mechanism for social control..., but one might also argue that the inadequate diffusion of even arguably authoritarian schools during much of the region's history also served as an instrument for the depoliticization of the masses and a curb on the formation of a sense of active citizenship (Kirkendall, 2010, p. 6). The relationship between language and power is evident throughout Brazil's history, and access to education has long been used to restrict who has access to both

linguistic legitimacy and power. Through the country's transition from Portuguese colony to independent empire (1822-1825), the abolition of slavery (1888) and the coup that established a military-controlled republic (1889), Brazil's power and wealth remained in the hands of a relatively small number of families who depended on the labors of a large, generally rural, uneducated and unpaid (slave) or later poorly paid population. While this economic system continued to function, the elites in power had essentially no motivation at all to educate the general population. This extended so far as to include basic literacy. In this section I will trace the connection between language and power as global forces provided incentives for Brazil's ruling elites to expand access to language education - first in terms of Portuguese literacy and later in terms of English - even as they sought to retain economic, political and social power.

The Expansion of Literacy

Literacy for the elites. There has long been a direct connection between literacy and power in Brazil. Voting was restricted to literate men until 1932, when literate women also gained the vote. This enabled the small educated class to maintain political power and created an obvious incentive to restrict education only to that class. It would be much longer before the right to vote was extended to non-literate Brazilians. According to Bohn (2003), until the end of World War II, education was almost exclusively the realm of the ruling class, with over 80% of all educational initiatives and school systems being private and even public education being subject to rigorous entrance requirements (p. 164).

Elite education drew heavily on the French humanist model and reinforced the perceived superiority of European cultures over the diversity of indigenous, African, and European cultural influences represented by the Brazilian poor. There was a distinct difference between common daily Portuguese and that of literate Brazilians. The teaching of French, English, Spanish and Latin was encouraged (Bohn, 2003, p. 165), with the French language and culture serving as a marker of particularly high status for the intellectual and economic elites (Rajagopalan, 2003; Rajagopalan & Rajagopalan, 2014). This “education for leisurely consumption” (Freire, as quoted in Kirkendall, 2010, p. 43) for the rich minority and complete lack of education for the poor majority created a marked cultural and linguistic divide. In this context the culture and language of the majority of Brazil were considered not only inferior, but essentially non-existent.

Legacies of this history can still be found today. Brazilian Portuguese contains significant variation both regionally and in terms of class, with lower status rural and lower-class versions the objects of jokes and scorn. The term “mal educado” (literally “poorly taught”) is used to indicate vulgarity or lack of manners, while saying someone is “sem cultura” (“without culture”) means they have little formal education, unconsciously carrying these old associations into the present. The old system of oligarchical rule remains as well, exemplified by the Sarney family in Maranhão (see Romero, 2014; Antunes, 2014) and other powerful families especially in rural and agrarian states. This includes the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, where I live, in which the majority of land is occupied by enormous ranches and farms staffed by low-paid workers who continue to bring their employers immense wealth.

Literacy for democracy. It took outside economic forces to jolt this long-entrenched system into change. The end of World War II, newly-instated democratic government in 1945, and the global industrialization boom caused Brazil's ruling elites to reconsider the value of popular education. In the 1950s "government and private capital was used to implement an ambitious national industrialization project," at which point "government authorities and administrators discovered that such a project demanded skilled and literate workers" (Bohn, 2003, p. 164). However, the largely agrarian and illiterate population was simply not prepared to quickly and easy transition to industrial jobs. Educators such as Paulo Freire, leftist activists and politicians on both sides of the political divide joined together in a push to promote literacy, particularly in the northeastern region, in order to ensure Brazil's place in the industrialized and developed world. It marked a major change in the country's priorities and opened a door for political change by, for the first time, offering the possibility that the working class might be able to significantly affect elections. Kirkendall (2010) notes that the electorate jumped from 16 percent to 25 percent between 1945 and 1962, and that this encouraged politicians to take a new, more populist stance (p. 14).

This massive change opened up space for new perspectives on education. For Freire and many of his colleagues, the goal was not simply to teach adults to read and write, but to improve their lives by helping them to see themselves as actors with the ability to affect their own realities, and as citizens more capable of participating in the democratic process (Kirkendall, 2010). He focused on helping people identify and value their culture and daily language while encouraging them to talk about and question the

struggles of their everyday lives. In this era of Cold War politics, the prospect of a conscious and active, newly-educated working class excited leftist activists and populist politicians, who supported Freire's work. This included João Belchior Marques Goulart, who served as Brazil's vice president from 1956-1961 and as president from 1961-1964. However, the continued impact of centuries of suppression was acknowledged by Freire and his colleagues, Brazilian politicians, and the anti-communist U.S. government, who were all deeply aware of the interplay between old and new societal forces. On the one hand, analyses by U.S. officials "suggested that the ignorance, fatalism, and passivity of the Brazilian peasantry mitigated against revolutionary agitation" (Kirkendall, 2010, p. 31). Freire believed that "people were 'emerging' and 'demanding solutions' to their problems but were being held back by authoritarian habits, the tendency to defer to authority..., and to put personal loyalties over the common good..., as well as the tendency to be passive and to remain silent" (Kirkendall, 2010, p. 22). The additional influence of the Catholic church as a pacifying influence could be heard in the common response "What can I do? It is the will of God and I must accept it" (from Freire, 1970 quoted in Mayo, 1995, p. 372).

Nevertheless, conservatives in the military found enough to worry them. Kirkendall (2010) draws a direct connection between the leftist tendency to overstate the role of literacy programs in creating "revolution" and the 1964 U.S. supported military coup which brought a swift end to such programs. Many of Freire's colleagues and supporters were imprisoned, as was Freire himself before being sent into exile.

Literacy for Industrialization. During Brazil's period of military government (1964-1988), "traditional educational values were replaced by instrumental objectives which were consistent with the competitive needs associated with globalization". Foreign languages, arts and humanities were deemphasized in favor of "technical competencies so schools could prepare skillful workers for the fast industrialization process and for the international market" and "physical education, patriotic indoctrination, and laboratory work were introduced in the curriculum" (Bohn, 2003, p. 165). According to Kirkendall (2010) "the military sought to reinforce old habits of deference by employing repression more extensively in the northeast and targeting peasants and union members in particular, thus making plain the dangers of a heightened consciousness" (p. 59). As a result, although literacy increased and public education became more available during the period of military rule, it was done in a way that maintained and reinforced the control of the powerful, and discouraged critical thinking, independent thought, or participation by the general population.

The model implemented was not so different from that of Victorian England a century before, in which education was the "machine to produce" the people needed to run a "global computer made up of people" "without computers, without telephones, with data handwritten on pieces of paper, and traveling by ships". The goal was to create people who were "so identical that you could pick one up from New Zealand and ship them to Canada and he would be instantly functional" (Mitra, 2013, 0:55). Freire described this as 'banking education', explaining it this way:

Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorise and repeat. This the “banking” concept of education in which the scope of action allowed to students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits (in Mayo, 1995, p. 365).

In this way, students gained the basic skills they needed for the jobs created by industrialization without threatening the multiple power structures - the company and the government - in which they operated.

The transition to democratic government in 1988 finally brought voting rights for all, regardless of literacy. Additionally, literacy rates have certainly risen, especially for younger generations. A report by the British Council (2014) shows a remarkable increase in functional literacy among Brazilians by age, using data from 2011 showing that although 52 percent of Brazilians age 50 to 64 are functionally illiterate, this number drops to 30 percent among 35 to 49 year olds, 18 percent among 25 to 34 year olds, and 11 percent among 15 to 24 year olds (p. 10).

With literacy rates rising, overall academic achievement has risen as well. According to data from 2013, 57 percent of 18 to 30 year olds have completed high school or higher, compared to only 32 percent of 46 to 60 year olds (p. 9). In my experience, it is clear that Brazilians currently place enormous value on education, particularly for the younger generation, and I know of a number of families where children in their twenties and thirties have reached significantly higher educational levels than their parents. Policies designed to lift the poorest Brazilians out of abject poverty have had an impact, and the middle class is growing.

However, access to education remains unequal. Even as public education was expanded under military government, the ruling elites were able to maintain a differentiated educational system by using their wealth to develop the existing private educational infrastructure alongside the new public infrastructure, and this dual system remains in place to this day. As a result, the wealthy are still best prepared to pass university entrance exams and thus are more likely to seize places at the prestigious free public universities, while poorly-prepared public school students are often left with a choice of nonprofit and for-profit universities offering programs with varying degrees of quality at varying tuition rates. This offers obvious advantages to the wealthy, whose early investments in education pay off in their ability to obtain more prestigious degrees quickly and with less financial stress.

Additionally, the public schools continue to be underfunded, with underpaid and underprepared teachers (British Council, 2014; Rajagopalan & Rajagopalan, 2014). A 1996 bill (the Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação, or Bill of Directions and Foundations of Education), put humanities subjects back into the national curriculum, and a progressive national curriculum reform was launched in 1997. However, specific choices about implementation were often left to school districts which were unprepared for the work of determining priorities, approach, and materials (Bohn, 2003). Implementation has been inconsistent, and particularly in poor and rural areas, educational approaches and school cultures have changed less than would be hoped.

The Expansion of English

English for the elites. If education and literacy have historically been the realm of Brazil's elites, foreign language proficiency has been a marker of status within this class. As mentioned, until World War II, proficiency in French and association with French culture and Europe in general were particularly prized. Although some Brazilians studied English as a foreign language, it was only during the United States' rise to power following World War II that English gained its place as the preferred language of study (Rajagopalan, 2003; Rajagopalan & Rajagopalan, 2014; Bohn, 2003). This put it in what Braj Kachru (1985) called the "expanding circle" of English-speaking countries, "which recognize the importance of English as an international language, though they do not have a history of colonization by members of the inner circle, nor have they given English any special administrative status... In these areas, English is taught as a foreign language" (Crystal, 2003, p. 60).

The abrupt shift to military government in 1964 had an important and lasting impact on the way English was and still is taught today. During this period, although public education was expanded, foreign languages were removed from the public school curriculum. However, wealthy Brazilians realized that English proficiency was going to be necessary to maintain power and status in a globalized world. Their willingness and ability to pay for private English instruction "created a powerful national language teaching business that spread franchised schools all over the country" (Bohn, 2003, p. 165). Their wealth has also given this class access to travel and study opportunities in English-speaking countries, a luxury that most of Brazil has only been

able to dream of. Thus, since the 1970s the wealthy have been ensuring that they and their children have had access to English while the rest of the country did not.

Foreign languages were only added back into the public school curriculum with the 1996 bill. The 24-year break meant that public school teachers were largely unprepared to for this shift, and the lack of direction also meant a lack of support (Bohn, 2003, p. 166). Even now, teacher preparation is a challenge. The British Council (2014) states that “government representatives and teachers alike... argue that a bachelor degree in literature coupled with a teaching license does not prepare a language teacher for the reality of the classroom and to effectively teach the language” and that teachers generally “lack the communication practice required to develop the command of a language”(p. 13). It seems that there are basic proficiency requirements for students entering these programs in larger cities, but I have taught five public school teachers and teachers-in-training in Bonito, none of whom had more than a lower-intermediate conversational level. Those who reached this level did so because of their own independent study efforts often long after receiving their degree. Several of my students were placed in schools to teach without even a basic command of the language. As The British Council (2014) notes, “in these conditions English teaching is reduced to the basic rules of grammar, reading short texts and learning to pass multiple choice exams for university”(p. 12). They suggest that the lack of prepared teachers is largely responsible for low English proficiency in Brazil.

Because of lack of resources and unprepared teachers, public education is generally not considered a viable option for learning English. Children in private

schools may receive better English instruction in school, or wealthy parents enroll them in extracurricular classes. For adults, for-profit schools are still considered the “preferred alternative” for 87 percent of respondents (British Council, 2014, p. 17).

And just as with literacy, there is a significant urban-rural divide with English proficiency. In general, urbanization is linked to both higher incentive to learn English and greater access to instruction, a divide with which I am personally familiar. Rural public schools tend to struggle even more than urban ones to find qualified teachers, and language school franchises depend on either high prices or high enrollment (or both) to stay profitable, making them far less present in Brazil's small towns and remote areas. In the case of Bonito, despite the demand caused by tourism, we have no franchise language institutes and only one private school which is owned and operated by its single teacher. The nearest comparable option is located an hour away.

The cost of private language education is significant. British Council (2014) survey respondents “considered the main language schools in the country ‘expensive’” with a monthly cost representing “between 20% and 52% of the average monthly salary”. According to the report, “most students’ average monthly English learning expense is over R\$ 480” (p. 25). For comparison, the nationally decreed minimum monthly salary for 2014 was R\$ 724 (Decreto N° 8.166, 2013). This makes it accessible to the wealthy, aspirational for the growing middle class, and so out of reach for the rest of Brazilians that they are not even considered by the British Council’s report.

Worse, these expensive private schools employ variable methodology and instruction of variable quality. They are driven by a profit motive, and as a result often

commodify education, trying to speed up and simplify the "delivery" process while charging as much as they can. The business structure means that even schools which are genuinely concerned with their students' progress are caught between consumer (student) expectations for quick and easy results and challenging market conditions, making it difficult to offer financial stability and support to teachers. In addition, the previously-mentioned tendency of students to depend heavily on the teacher to "insert knowledge" conflicts with the nature of language learning, which requires a much richer level of engagement by learners.

The result is that in large cities students may cycle through various programs for years at high expense with limited improvement in proficiency. "Teachers and experts acknowledge that English teaching - both public and private - is unable to provide students with a usable level of English" (British Council, 2014, p. 12). Indeed, many of my students hold a sort of fatalistic doubt that they are even capable of learning the language, and often have the intention of spending several weeks or months in English programs abroad as they believe immersion is the only way to actually learn English. In the meantime, however, Brazilians often seem to feel caught between spending exorbitant amounts of money on English instruction that may not deliver results and just giving up.

The numbers support this. According to the British Council (2014), only about 5% of Brazilians self-report some knowledge of English and half of these rate themselves at a basic level. This number doubles among younger respondents (10.3% among 18-24 year olds) and upper-class respondents (9.9%, compared to only 3.4% of middle class

respondents)(p. 7-8), reflecting the same generational and class divides as general educational achievement. Although this is not included in the report, anecdotal evidence suggests that English fluency is also much higher in urban centers than in rural areas where access is lower.

The result on the present reality is clear. Where literacy was once the marker that defined the haves and have-nots, now it is English. Once again, access to education largely depends on ability to pay. Further, English has become a tool to pass power down generationally and maintain the power structure. “The ability to comprehend, read, and write in a foreign language, in most cases English, has become a basic requirement when applying for the best paid positions on both the private and public Brazilian job markets” making it a way to limit the playing field and exclude most Brazilians from competing for these positions (Bohn, 2003, p. 160).

English and identity. In addition to challenges in terms of access, the history of English education in Brazil is marked by a set of conflicting attitudes toward the language (Rajagopalan, 2003; Rajagopalan & Rajagopalan, 2014). English is still generally taught as a foreign language (EFL) in Brazil, with schools choosing British or American English as the ideal model. Just as once was the case with French, connections to the United States and Britain and English fluency are markers of status. Rajagopalan and Rajagopalan (2014) suggest that the adoption of English words into Portuguese, even where Portuguese words exist, is a way of defining upper-class elite status.

However, even among upper-class and upwardly mobile Brazilians, there is ambivalence related to concern over U.S. global hegemony (Rajagopalan, 2003). I have seen abundant evidence of both attitudes affecting English learning. At one extreme, I've known Brazilians to intentionally avoid not only studying the English language but also English music and American pop culture as a way to reject notions of American and European superiority and valorize a Brazilian identity. On the other hand, some of the most successful English learners I know have become so by fully embracing American culture and almost obsessively immersing themselves in English-language media, at the risk of being seen as snobbish. Most learners fall somewhere in the middle of this range, however, and struggle to find a way to reconcile learning the language for practical purposes with maintaining a positive Brazilian identity.

The Psychological Legacies of Oppression

There is no doubt that change has come since the return to democracy in 1988 and that overall Brazilians are better off now than they have been in the past. However, in the area of education, groundbreaking innovations seem too few and far between to have made a difference in the expectations of society at large. Ricardo Semler (2014), for example, tried to give his innovative model of primary education to various public school systems, but there was no interest. On a smaller scale, I have friends who resigned from their positions as a teacher and a pedagogical expert in Bonito to change careers, having repeatedly met with disinterest and bureaucratic resistance to their attempts to improve local education. The cutting-edge conversations of academia and

the forward-thinking curricular parameters of 1997 have not yet had a significant effect on the public consciousness. Because the English-teaching market is driven by the consumer demands of the public, limited fundamental change has been seen there either. As a result, assumptions of what education is and expectations for what it could be remain limited by the past. While the growth of entrepreneurship and the new middle class are wearing away at the old economic models of oppression and social media is making the cracks in the political systems evident, much of the population nevertheless remains passively locked in old ideas of who they are and what they can be.

Passive obedience. Signs of Freire's critical pedagogy are rare, as the military government of 1964 was effective at imprisoning and exiling those they considered a threat, confiscating materials they considered communist, and implementing an educational system that emphasized technical competencies as well as "physical education, patriotic indoctrination, and laboratory work" (Bohn, 2003, p. 165). "The teacher fronted classroom, guided by authoritarian teaching materials fragmented into disciplines, units, lessons, and structures, continues to be the general teaching model of the Brazilian school system" (Bohn, 2003, p. 169). This oppressive model has had exactly the effects the military government sought: to make the risk-taking involved in creative pursuits too dangerous, to discourage questioning and critical thinking, and to create a passive and obedient population of workers (see Freire in Mayo, 1995). Under this model, students learn quickly to defer to teachers in every way, becoming dependent on the teacher and the class structure. Bohn (2003) notes that not only have teachers been "unable to create the socio-interactional environment needed to fulfill the

cognitive functions in learning” but that “learners have refused to abandon the comfortable passive role that classroom tradition has assigned them” (p. 168). With generations of Brazilians having passed through this system, such comfort in passivity is understandable. According to Freire, “under such conditions, freedom becomes a fearful thing” for those who have been “so domesticated that any activity which entails creativity presents itself to them as a fearful journey into the unknown” (Mayo, 1995, p. 365). Indeed, I have found that teenaged students and those who are used to the quick-thinking world of tourism are often more able to take risks in the classroom and engage in approaches to learning which require their participation and creativity. Some of the most resistant students, on the other hand, have been public school teachers. At the very least, this inhibits language proficiency, which cannot be achieved through rote memorization and must involve engagement, critical thinking, risk-taking and creative play. More though, it prevents Brazilians from experimenting, questioning, and imagining a better - and perhaps even more enjoyable - way to learn.

Suffering and utility. Another related legacy of Brazil’s history is resignation to suffering, which also seems to pervade people’s attitudes toward learning. Bohn (2003) asserts that both teachers and students have absorbed the Christian notion that current suffering is requisite for future joy, such that “students are not invited or allowed to enjoy the pleasures of knowledge building in the classroom” (p. 169). The general cultural view seems to be that while “studying” is necessary for economic advancement, it must involve force, difficulty, drudgery, and perpetual inadequacy. Students tend to believe that any failure or resistance is an indication that the individual is either incapable or

simply needs to “study more”. When students are struggling, they often say they need to “correr atras”, or work harder, but which literally translates as ‘run behind’. When I ask students to brainstorm ideas of how they might prepare for a test, they often struggle to name any activity beyond “read the book”. “Studying” has become so divorced from actual learning that it is difficult for most Brazilians to imagine that spark of joy that comes from discovering something oneself as having any relationship whatsoever to the necessary class hours, tests, diplomas and certificates required for advancement in the job market. If anyone is allowed to have joy with their education, it remains the wealthy minority.

Education is generally considered a necessary and practical tool for avoiding the (very real) suffering of poverty, rather than a pleasurable route to becoming a more well-rounded human or critical thinker, which were foundational values of my own liberal arts education in the U.S. According to the British Council (2014):

“university is perceived as a way of developing the basis for a professional career. For 8 out of every 10 people, the main reason to go to university is to get a better job, and 84% of people believe that level of education is directly related to earnings” (p. 9).

However, there are differences in the utility of education based on class. According to the British Council (2014), education is seen purely as a means to professional achievement for the middle class, while it contributes to a sense of individual identity for the elite.

In no way do I intend to diminish the importance of education in providing access to better employment. Educational achievement is a critical factor in the growth of the new middle class and in rising standards of living for the Brazilian population, which in turn will strengthen the country's democracy. However, learning is deeper and broader when the fun of exploration is involved. By removing pleasure, either externally through authoritarian approaches to teaching or internally through the belief that learning is difficult or boring, a psychological conflict is created between what learners "should" do (study, work hard, prepare for the future) and "want" to do (relax, have fun) which compromises their engagement in the learning process.

As in the past, the wealthy have access to more humanist models of education which value creative and artistic pursuits, the development of the whole person, and the pleasures of learning. This perspective has historically only been available to those who had both the leisure to enjoy learning on their own terms and the power and wealth to make education for the sake of improving one's standard of living unnecessary and perhaps even gauche. The continued ignorance of the middle and working classes to the idea that education can be enjoyable, and that learning can be a part of leisure serves to maintain the status quo by creating yet another barrier to achievement. This is problematic not only for the individuals who end up struggling and demotivated, but for the country as a whole. As globalization makes new demands and presents new challenges, a passive, uncreative population which sees education as the utilitarian acquisition of information and a diploma will not be agile enough to adapt.

The Demands and Solutions of Globalization

Increasingly Complex Demands

As during the post-war industrialization boom of the 1950s, modern globalization is presenting a set of opportunities to those with the ability to take advantage of them. But the stakes are arguably higher and the competition greater as well. One of the ways that Brazil is not yet prepared to meet the challenges of globalization is education, because globalization is fundamentally changing the expectations for what “educated” means. Traditional education is “obsolete” (Semler, 2014; Mitra, 2013) as “the basis of the world economy” shifts “from industry to knowledge”(Bloom, 2004, p. 59). Industrialization of the 1950s, 60s and 70s may have required a literate workforce, but it did not require much more than that. Shallow, rote educational practices served the ruling class by providing workers with only what they needed to do the job while suppressing independent thinking. The modern challenges of globalization demand exactly the opposite approach: they demand the same kind of critical pedagogy that Freire hoped would help create a vibrant democracy for Brazil.

Bloom (2004) suggests that education needs to prepare people for three effects of globalization: (a) the need to be more productive and competitive in international markets, (b) the need to be able to communicate effectively cross-nationally and cross-culturally, and (c) the need to be able to adapt and respond to the increasing speed of exchanges which present both new threats and new opportunities. This requires “higher order cognitive and interpersonal skills” (Bloom, 2004, p. 69) which are actively suppressed in the sort of education that is most prevalent in Brazil. Gardner

(2004) suggests that goals for education should include an understanding of the global system, the capacity to think analytically and creatively within disciplines, the ability to tackle problems and issues that do not respect disciplinary boundaries, the knowledge of and ability to interact civilly and productively with individuals from quite different cultural backgrounds, the knowledge of and respect for one's own cultural traditions, the fostering of hybrid or blended identities, and the fostering of tolerance (p. 253-255).

This presents an obvious challenge, as Brazil's education system is clearly far from being able to provide these sorts of outcomes. Furthermore, Brazilians are clearly feeling the pressure to learn the languages, particularly English, which facilitate the global flow of information and allow people to engage on these different levels.

Given low English fluency in the country, this might seem like more cause for worry, but I also see reason for hope. There is a convergence occurring in which the skills demanded by globalization are the same as those which both aid and are developed by language learning. Furthermore, they are the same as those needed for informed democratic participation. This means that language learning - by which I mean engaging in the complex process which results in actual linguistic proficiency - can be both an end goal and an entry point for practicing the skills and building awareness that are also needed for participation in a global community. Likewise, the problem-solving and communication skills developed while working in globalized industries will aid the language learning process. This may in turn jumpstart much-needed changes to the political and education systems in order to support the process further.

EIL as a Solution

Since the 1990s, experts have been tracking and discussing the development of what I will call English as an International Language (EIL), though as Seidlhofer (2003) notes, there are a number of terms in use to describe the use of English as an international lingua franca. As has been observed by Crystal (2003), Jenkins, (2000, 2002), Seidlhofer (2003) and many others, inner-circle (Kachru, 1985) English speakers are far outnumbered by speakers from the outer and expanding-circle countries, and as a result in international contexts the number of interactions involving only “non-native” speakers (NNSs) is far higher than those involving “native-speakers” (NSs). This is changing the “rules” of English communication, at least in EIL contexts, in important ways.

The most relevant way for Brazilians in my opinion is that it is shifting the norms and expectations for NNS speakers away from the EFL-oriented goal of “standardizing of learners’ speech to bring it in line with an imagined L1 standard” (Jenkins, 2000, p. 53), and instead toward a more practical and inclusive goal of intelligibility to other NNSs (Jenkins, 2000, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2003; Walker, 2010). With intelligibility rather than “native-ness” as the goal, the assumed superiority of native speakers is removed. “Speakers of EIL are not ‘foreign’ speakers of the language, but ‘international’ speakers” (Jenkins, 2002, p.85). This removes the possibility of insider and outsider status, and makes all ‘international’ speakers (whether NS or NNS) equally responsible for effective communication. Interestingly, NSs are not necessarily the most easy to understand in EIL contexts, suggesting they too need to learn to speak EIL: phonologically, Jenkins

(2005) cites evidence that the two most commonly taught accents, Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA) “have been found empirically to be less intelligible to NNSs than other NNS accents” (Jenkins, 2005, p. 12). I believe that making Brazilian learners aware of this aspect of EIL and explicitly teaching to EIL rather than EFL standards can significantly impact English learning and teaching in Brazil in several ways.

First, it removes the psychological dilemma inherent in learning GA or RP, as EIL represents neither the hegemony of the United States nor the inferiority complex Brazilians have long had in relation to Europe. Instead, it is the means by which Brazilians can participate globally using a Brazilian variety of English which is equally valid to, and judged by the same measures as, other varieties. As a result, EIL fluency can coexist with a Brazilian identity without threatening or diminishing it.

Second, with NS speech no longer the model of error-free speech, we can redefine what counts as an “error”. Seidlhofer (2003) suggests that “‘overuse’ or ‘underuse’ of certain expressions... could be regarded as a feature characterizing successful EIL use (p. 20) rather than as inadequate or incorrect use of the language. Jenkins (2000, 2002) suggests that L1 phonological transfer which results in an accent and which does not inhibit intelligibility should be considered a valid way of expressing identity rather than an inability to adequately imitate a NS accent. By redefining error as related to intelligibility and acceptability to NNSs, proficiency in EIL becomes an achievable goal compared to the nearly impossible (and for the most part useless) goal of speaking like an NS. I expect this to have affective benefits in terms of confidence

and motivation for learners. It also sets a new standard by which students can judge teachers and teachers can judge themselves (Jenkins, 2000; Walker, 2010). Rather than considering Brazilian teachers to be lacking for not being NSs, students can look up to their teachers as successful examples of language learners, international communicators, and experts in EIL. This sets an achievable goal for teachers and a legitimate basis for self-respect, which in turn affects the students for whom they are models.

Finally, a focus on EIL is practical, in that it allows us to focus our attention on aspects of the language that impact communication (Jenkins, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2003) and that are teachable (Jenkins, 2000). Although there is still quite a lot we do not know about how EIL is different from NSs varieties of English, one clear example is in the realm of pronunciation. Jenkins (2000, 2002) addresses the reality that the variations of English encompassed in EIL are more different phonologically than in other areas such as lexis or grammar and that variation in pronunciation is more likely to negatively affect intelligibility than these other areas. Using international intelligibility and acceptability as our benchmarks we can be more efficient and effective in how we use classroom time and hopefully boost both proficiency and confidence more quickly.

Keeping in mind the historical, social, cultural and economic factors discussed here with regard to education and English, let us now look at the specific challenges, opportunities and motivations that affect language learning in the town of Bonito, where this project is based.

A New Approach to English Learning

The Local Context

In many ways, Bonito reflects the same struggles as other small rural towns in Brazil in terms of access and attitudes toward education, while maintaining a distinct regional culture. At the same time, as one of Brazil's top ecotourism destinations, the use of EIL - and I will demonstrate here why we must think of English use in Bonito as EIL rather than EFL even in interactions with "native speakers" - is an ever more important aspect of the town's economic life.

History, economy, and culture. Located in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul in the central-west part of the country, Bonito is just hours from the Paraguayan border and located in the region that was disputed during the Paraguayan War (1864-1870). It is Brazil's 'wild west', with a 400-year history of ranching and a more recent transition to large-scale agriculture. The culture is based heavily on a ranching lifestyle and shares a complicated relationship with the indigenous people of the area, having more in common with neighboring Paraguay and Bolivia than with Brazil's large urban centers or the more African-influenced north-east of Brazil. Roughly similar in size and population to the U.S. state of New Mexico, it has only about 2.6 million inhabitants in an area of over 350 thousand square kilometers, giving it an average population density of less than seven people per square kilometer according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, State census summary for Mato Grosso do Sul, 2010). A third of these, or approximately 853 thousand people, live in the state capital, with the rest in smaller cities, towns, and in remote locations (IBGE, Campo Grande city

summary, 2010). Much of the state is divided into enormous privately-owned landholdings, with a long history of extreme wealth in the hands of a few and a large wealth gap between them and the people they employ.

Bonito is located just south of the Pantanal: an enormous floodplain encompassing the world's largest wetlands, which has long been a destination for biologists, birdwatchers, nature lovers, and fishermen. However, it is only in the last three decades that Bonito has become known as an ecotourism destination in its own right, famous for its crystalline rivers, limestone caves and wildlife. In 1993 the first certification course opened to train local tour guides, and in 1996 a unique voucher system was implemented to regulate ticket sales and visitor numbers to the region's ecotourism attractions. According to the forthcoming third edition of the Bonito Field Guide (Coelho et. al, in press), the last 20 years have seen Bonito grow from 3 ecotourism attractions, 6 tour agencies and 10 hotels to 30 attractions, 33 agencies and 70 hotels. Of the 30 different attractions, 28 are privately owned and operated, demonstrating the strong economic incentives available for large scale landholders to convert and preserve some parts of their land for ecotourism. For thirteen consecutive years Bonito was named "Best Ecotourism Destination in Brazil" by the magazine *Viagem e Turismo*, and in 2013 it won the World Travel Market's award for "Best Destination for Responsible Tourism".

Fifty percent of the town's workforce is employed by the town's ecotourism industry (Coelho et. al, in press). The population grew from 16 thousand to 20 thousand, or 25 percent, between 1992 and 2010 (IBGE, Bonito population growth,

2010). Current estimates put the town's population at closer to 21 thousand (IBGE, Bonito city summary, 2010). Assuming half of the town's population is employed, that leaves approximately 6 thousand people working in tourism.

Since arriving less than four years ago, I have seen the incredible impact of tourism on the town in terms of infrastructure such as newly-paved roads, secondary economic benefits such as an ongoing construction boom, and a remarkable level of personal safety given the state's ongoing struggle with drug-related violence due to the nearby international border.

Tourism has also had an impact on the culture of the town. There is tension between the traditional slow-paced and community-based agrarian culture and the push for efficiency and professionalism brought by outsiders from larger cities who seek to grow the tourism industry. Local politics reflect the strain between the interests of large-scale agriculture and the environmental protections necessary for ecotourism. On the other hand, the differences between old and new seem to support each other. Locals have generally adopted a "live-and-let-live" attitude towards the diversity of ideas and identities brought by tourists and new residents from other cities and countries, and newcomers stay because of the community feel and relaxed pace of life. I believe both sides have something important to offer in terms of creating a culture around language study and learning.

Language use, language teaching, and education. As a small town in rural Brazil, Bonito's public education system reflects all the challenges previously discussed here, from lack of resources to authoritarian teaching styles. In addition, according to

personal conversations I've had with a couple who spent years trying change the system (she as a teacher and he as a pedagogical expert), there is intense bureaucratic resistance to implementing new approaches in the public elementary schools.

Bonito has one private elementary school which is the default choice for families that can afford the tuition. In 2010, a small campus of the federal university system was built in order to offer degrees in business administration and tourism, but there is talk that these undergraduate programs are in the process of closing. A campus of the state university an hour away offers five undergraduate degree options, including one in Portuguese and English literature which is the basic degree needed to teach these subjects in the public school. It is common for middle and upper class families to send their children to the state capital of Campo Grande to prepare for and attend university.

Officially and in practice, Portuguese is the dominant language in all respects, but there is a remarkable degree of contact with other languages in Bonito. A nearby reservation means that people have more awareness of Tupi-Guaraní and indigenous culture than in many parts of Brazil. Proximity to the border and economic factors mean frequent contact with Paraguayans, who speak both Spanish and Guarani. The opportunity to gain experience in the tourism industry and learn Portuguese make Bonito an attractive place for young people from other Latin American countries to work or do internships, bringing more contact with Spanish. A handful of foreigners from a variety of other countries have integrated ourselves into the community, bringing French, English, German, and Japanese, while foreign tourists, of course, bring contact with a variety of languages.

While the majority of tourists continue to be Brazilian and the tourism industry generally operates in Portuguese, English and Spanish are key tourism languages although proficiency in both remains low in the general population. It is generally accepted that numbers of foreign visitors are increasing and that the need for English is growing. Because the tourism industry is so young and still rather disorganized and unprofessional, there is not a lot of official data available. However, Recanto Ecológico Rio da Prata, which operates one of the region's top ecotourism attractions - a river snorkeling adventure - provided me with visitor data they have been collecting since two years after they opened showing the relative percentages of Brazilian and foreign visitors to their attraction.

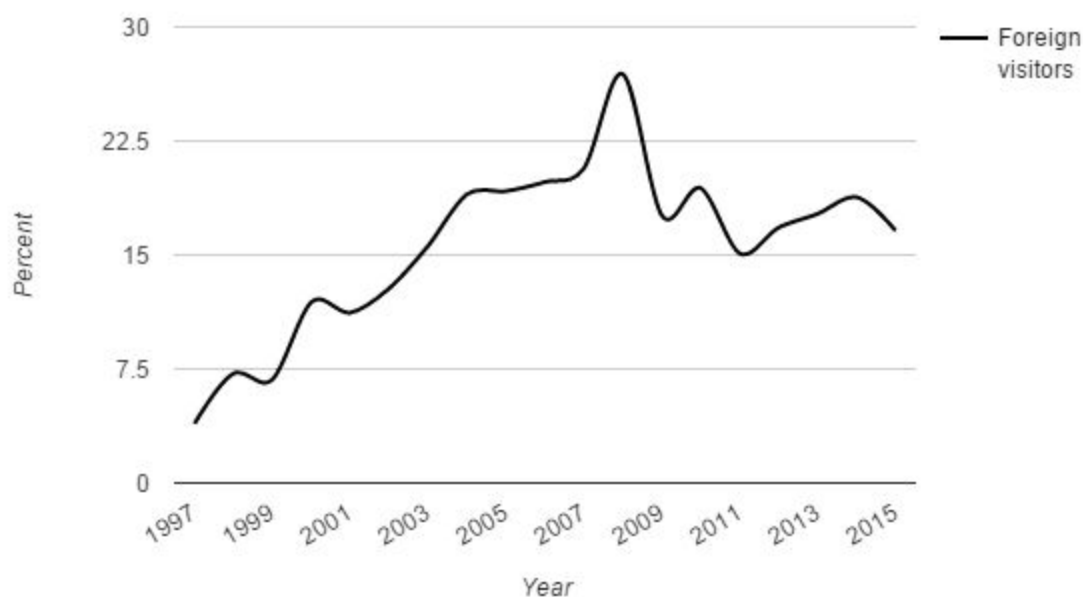


Figure 1. Foreign Visitors to Recanto Ecológico Rio da Prata snorkeling activity as percentage of total visitors from 1997 to 2015 (Bryant, 2015).

I am unsure if the steep rise in foreign visitors to Rio da Prata between 1997 and 2009 reflects an equivalent increase in international visitors to the region during that period, or simply that a greater percentage of this company's sales went to this market segment. I imagine it is some combination of both factors. The spike and drop coincide with the financial boom and crisis of 2008-2009, but otherwise, for more than a decade foreign visitors have made up a fairly steady 15 to 20 percent of Rio da Prata's visitors.

Not all foreign visitors use English as the medium of communication, however, so I wanted to get an idea of what percentage of these cases would actually require English. I also wanted to know if my sense of the diversity of Englishes used, based on my work as an interpreter and various other conversations and observations, was reflected in the numbers.

Rio da Prata's breakdown of the countries of origin of foreign visitors (for the last 5 years) includes a large "uncategorized" group, which may reflect either enormous diversity or challenges with data collection. However, we can say that at least 57 percent of interactions with foreigners at Rio da Prata have likely been in English in the last 5 years. Furthermore, the even split between inner and outer-circle countries (the UK, Australia, the US and Canada in descending order) and expanding circle countries (Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Switzerland) suggests a range of English varieties and accents and some likely variation in proficiency. The non-EIL category includes Argentina and Paraguay, and is separate because it is unlikely that English would be the medium of communication with visitors from these countries given similarities between Spanish and Portuguese.

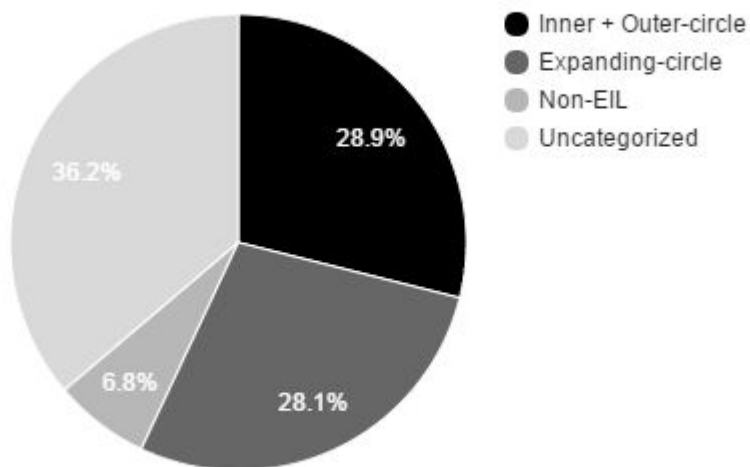


Figure 2. Foreign visitors to Rio da Prata (2010-2015) data by EIL category (Bryant, 2015).

Another source of data is the Bonito Convention and Visitors Bureau, which began publishing monthly email reports in January of 2015 including data on country of origin for visitors to Gruta do Lago Azul, a publicly owned and operated cave tour. Although it reflects a much shorter timespan, their data is more comprehensive in terms of country breakdown.

In comparison to Rio da Prata, foreigners represent a significantly lower percentage of visitors to the cave tour. Only 7.57 percent of the 85,745 visitors to the attraction between January 1 and July 1, 2015 were foreign. In addition, among foreign visitors the non-EIL category was much larger (38.2 percent), and included more countries¹.

¹ The majority of non-EIL visitors were from Paraguay (16.9 percent) and Argentina (8.5 percent), but the list also included Bolivia, Italy, Peru, Spain, Chile, Portugal, Colombia, Uruguay and Mexico.

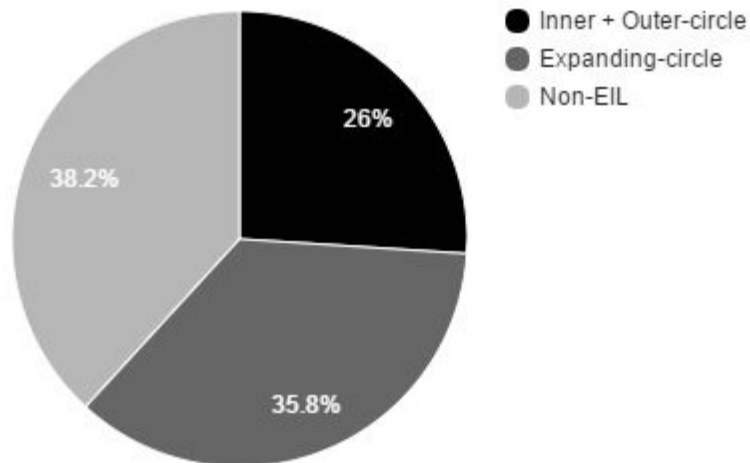


Figure 3. Foreign visitors to Gruta do Lago Azul cave tour (first half of 2015) by EIL category (Bryant, 2015).

Given key differences between the two activities, this makes sense. Rio da Prata and Gruta do Lago Azul are two of the most-visited attractions and it is possible to do both activities in a single trip, but they appeal to fairly different visitor profiles. Rio da Prata is the most adventurous and physically demanding snorkeling activity in the region, and the company is one of the best in terms of professionalism, safety, and infrastructure. The 2015 price for a three-hour snorkeling activity and lunch is R\$ 184 (low season) or \$218 (high season). By comparison, Gruta do Lago Azul's tour lasts less than two hours, does not include lunch, and costs only R\$ 45 (low season) or R\$ 60 (high season). This makes it a much more accessible option for Brazilians and other Latin Americans who often have more limited travel budgets. The cave also holds a special appeal for Brazilians as it was an important set location for a popular novela.

Despite these differences, the ratio of inner and outer-circle countries to expanding circle countries represented is roughly similar in both data sets and makes it clear that NSs are not dominant in Bonito tourism.

In addition, a closer look at the breakdown by country shows significant diversity within each category.

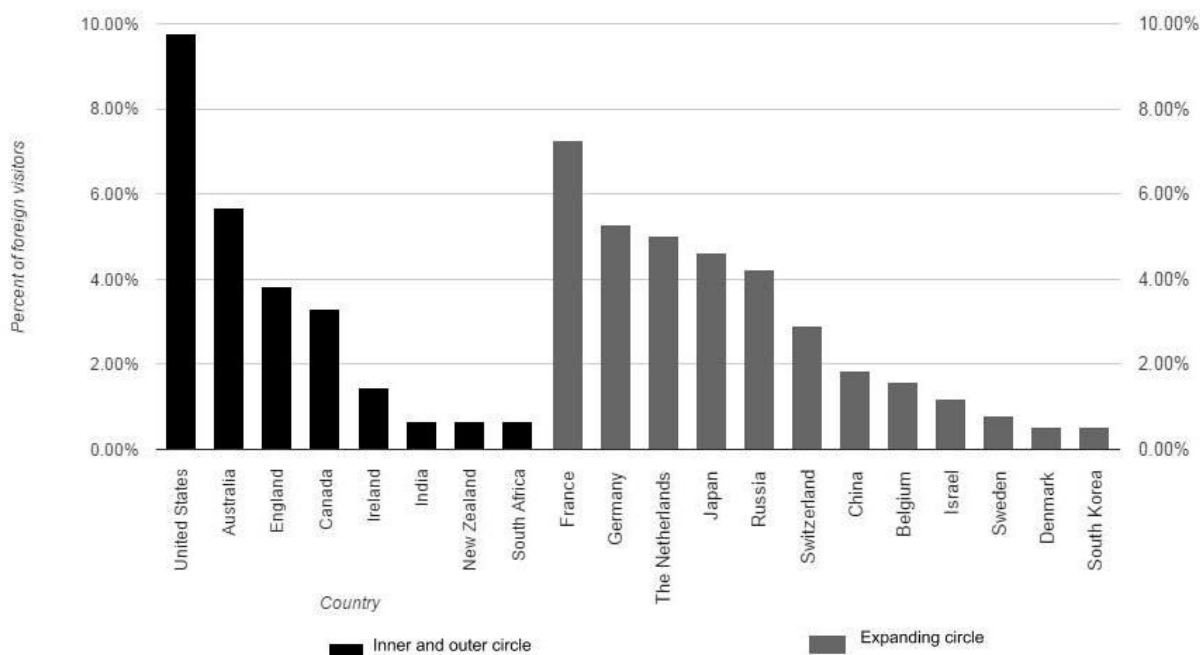


Figure 4. EIL visitors to Gruta do Lago Azul, first half of 2015 by country and EIL category (Bryant, 2015).

Given the strong representation of expanding circle countries and the diversity of L1s indicated, it is clear that a significant number of English interactions are likely to be NNS-NNS. Even in the case of inner circle tourists, a variety of Englishes are represented. Further, I believe that even these NS-NNS interactions can be considered EIL because of the context. In the case of Bonito tourism, workers who provide customer service in agencies, hotels, restaurants, shops, at the activities, and in

transport are in part serving as representatives and interpreters of the region's nature and culture. As a result, they and their Brazilian identity hold a unique value to their NS interlocutors in a way that might not in, for example, a business meeting in a U.S. based multinational company in São Paulo. The data also supports the EIL need for exposure to a range of Englishes for improved comprehension, and a focus on accommodation skills to ensure intelligibility to interlocutors from a range of L1s.

The market values employees who speak other languages. At one of Bonito's top-selling tour agencies the starting base salary is R\$ 934 per month, but agents who demonstrate that their language proficiency has benefited the company receive an additional R\$150 per month per language. They also receive 1% commission on sales (typically ranging from R\$ 1000 in the low season to as much as R\$ 4000 in the high season in extra pay), which will presumably be higher for agents who can effectively communicate with foreign clients. At another agency salary rates are not fixed, but one manager I know reported being hired as an agent at a starting salary of R\$1200 because of language proficiency in comparison to his monolingual colleagues, who earned between R\$ 800 and R\$ 900 per month. He assured me that language abilities are a strong reason for asking for higher pay. Clearly, language learning is financially worthwhile investment in Bonito.

Unfortunately, attitudes about the English language and English study often have not consciously caught up with the reality in front of learners. Based on experiences with primary education and sometimes private language institutes in other cities, English is still generally thought of as EFL and considered the domain of the British and

Americans. Grammar and translation have typically been the focus of instruction, in ways that were decontextualized and rigid, and most people's idea of "studying" involves sitting with an English textbook until one's eyes glaze over. This has left them wildly unprepared for the conversational English of tourism, which requires "agility and the ability to improvise in communication" (British Council, 2014, p. 16). As a result, English is often associated with boredom, inadequacy, failure, shame and struggle. This is unfortunate, because the tourism industry offers incredible opportunities language learners, and such associations often hold learners back from developing the basic linguistic foundation and courage needed to be able to take advantage of these opportunities.

An additional challenge in Bonito's tourism economy is making language education widely accessible in the face of financial and time constraints. The earnings of tour agents are quite high compared to most other jobs in the region, particularly for those without advanced degrees. However, restricting access to language education to only those who can pay high fees has the obvious economic impact of limiting the town's ability to adequately serve foreign visitors. I believe it also has numerous negative psychological and social effects in terms of reinforcing class division, denying the community of individual gifts that may go undiscovered or undeveloped, and limiting the synergy that occurs when many people are engaged in learning and improving together.

Absenteeism and time constraints seem to be a perpetual problem in adult education, but the tourism industry presents particular challenges. The high seasons

and special events are particularly demanding and require people in many professions to work particularly long hours. Hotels, shops, agencies and restaurants have long hours of operation and often choose not to guarantee their employees fixed schedules in order to maintain flexibility. Additionally, turnover tends to be high, causing managers and colleagues to need to compensate and often on short notice. Even when courses are scheduled during the low season, students miss class because this is the only time they can take the vacation time guaranteed them by law. As a result, following a long course of study becomes particularly challenging.

The Project: Connect Bonito

In the face of the many factors discussed in this paper, I believe that adults in Bonito need a radically different approach to language learning. It needs to go beyond the teaching approach used in the classroom. In fact, it needs to flip the script completely in terms of the role of the teacher, the role of the classroom, and the role of the learner. It essentially needs to undo the effects of traditional authoritarian education in Brazil, removing learners' intense dependence on the teacher and the class format and instead reconnecting them with the inner resources of curiosity, creativity and risk-taking that are the foundation of independent and experiential learning.

To this end, via a project I am calling Connect Bonito, I am working to build an engaged and participatory learning-focused community. Although I am exploring options for creating an institutional structure to support this community, I am intentionally avoiding the use of the word "school". By focusing on building a community, I am placing the focus not on the structure or approach but on the people

and the interactions between us. A school almost necessarily involves hierarchies of control and decision-making. In contrast, a community is an interconnected group of people who share support, resources, and often friendship according to the needs and abilities of each. Communities require participation and negotiation, because both power and responsibility are shared. In a community, I can share what I know about languages and learning and even act as a facilitator without taking on the expectation that I as the “expert” am responsible for inserting knowledge into students’ brains. In a community, learners can not abdicate responsibility for their own learning.

As I envision it, community members will participate in:

- exploring and experimenting with the learning process
- building a network of resources and support related to language and learning
- making learning and education accessible
- becoming competent communicators in EIL and other languages.

Exploring and experimenting with the learning process. By focusing on reconnecting people to their internal learning resources, I can both help more people learn English and help them develop as critical thinkers and learners in ways that will extend far beyond their study of English. Typical educational approaches require an incredible amount of work on the part of the teacher in terms of determining what should be taught and how, preparing activities and materials, face-to-face time with students, and assessing and reevaluating. Helping students engage with the experiential learning cycle (Kolb & Fry, 1975) themselves means that they can do these tasks for themselves and for each other. To quote Gattegno, “the teacher works with the student; the student

works on the language” (in Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 65). This involves a much deeper level of engagement with the language itself, meaning a better overall result for the students, and simultaneously builds their capacity to learn and explore other things that might be of interest. The result is a person who is much more capable of participating democratically at the local, national and global level in a way that I believe is ever more necessary.

Simultaneously, this approach frees up the teacher enormously, allowing fewer teachers - or perhaps we should call them learning coaches - to work with more learners in a targeted way, focusing on those areas which threaten to inhibit their engagement in the learning process in order to keep them moving. This allows Brazilian as well as NS teachers to be fully respected as experts, shifting the power dynamic toward equality and respect of local knowledge. It also means more people can be helped with a much smaller financial investment required from each individual, while simultaneously providing a much more powerful learning outcome. As such, it will be possible to avoid both the bureaucracy and power dynamics of public education and the exclusivity and class separation of the private model.

I am aware that this is inherently political. It is the next logical step of Freire’s critical pedagogy, which sought to raise consciousness and increase democratic participation. I see this sort of accessible, critical education as the solution to Brazil’s floundering and corruption-ridden democracy and intensely class inequality as well as entrenched racism and sexism. By taking education outside of both the political and economic systems which have been used to control the “masses”, I can offer Brazilians

the tools they need to create the change they want to see. I have no idea what that outcome might be, but I fully believe that it will be more just than the systems that currently exist.

Building a network of resources and support. The internet has made it possible to access an enormous wealth of language learning resources, such that any learner with internet access has plenty of information at their fingertips. However, much of it is generic, and some of it is much more useful than others. Building ways for learners in Bonito to share not only the resources that have been useful to them, but how and why to use them, encourages not only critical thinking about those resources but also an empathetic and cooperative atmosphere that aids learning. In such an environment, everyone knows something and can help someone. Additionally, learners themselves will hopefully make their own materials, which will be far more relevant and closely tied to the local context than resources found online. Creating ways for these to be shared and used by others makes English more accessible to less-proficient learners while validating the knowledge and expertise of the creators. It also allows everyone to participate in a sort of “crowdsourcing” to give feedback and drive everyone’s improvement. I imagine online networks (a website and smartphone/tablet apps, as well as use of existing options like Facebook), interpersonal networks such as independent peer-led study groups and groups to complete special projects, and a physical library.

Making learning and education accessible. By this I mean that we will actively work as a community to identify the barriers that prevent people from incorporating

learning into their lives, and working to find ways around those barriers. In large part, teaching people to make use of experiential learning on their own terms addresses this, as it removes dependence on class and teacher. In this way, learners can continue learning in the face of time and financial constraints. I also hope to have a physical space in the future which will offer internet access and tablets/computers, a physical library, games and play space, art and craft materials, class/meeting rooms, and tutors. It will be located between the town center and Bonito's poorest neighborhood in order to be physically accessible to the most number of people.

However, it is equally important to focus on making learning accessible psychologically, by which I mean identifying and addressing the psychological barriers that people erect to avoid taking action. This includes focusing on what people *can* do (study for ten minutes a day using the DuoLingo app, for example) rather than what they can't (attend a two-hour class twice a week). It involves explicitly teaching EIL as the goal, thereby removing the psychological dissonance associated with EFL values. It involves creating an accessible culture, in which diversity and people's individual gifts and perspectives are valued as enriching the community, while mutuality and cooperation are valued as strengthening it.

It also involves addressing certain attitudes about language learning and other large-scale projects. One is the idea that it is impossible: I want to focus on ways to break down the task and make it doable. An important piece of this is teaching people to make language learning habitual, because research shows that decision-making is exhausting. With a large-scale project like language learning, making the decision to do

something every day is impossible. Making interacting with the language into a habit removes this load and automatizes it (see Duhigg, 2012; Rubin, 2015).

On the other hand, learners will be more likely to start and continue if they see language learning as fun. Therefore, encouraging them to propose and create fun social events and activities which include some element of language learning will take away the sense of drudgery associated with “studying”, provide positive associations, and perhaps ameliorate the psychological difficulty learners sense when they do need to wrestle with a confusing aspect of grammar or a challenging interaction with a client.

Becoming competent communicators in EIL. Most learners will initially get involved with very limited understanding of the psychological impact of their country’s history on their own experience of and feelings about learning. They will not come to be a part of a community or to be better at learning, or to be better citizens. Their goal will be to learn English. Therefore, an important aspect of the project is helping them achieve this goal as quickly and easily as possible. The previous three aspects of the project are critical in achieving this, but learners will also seek out help specifically targeted at their need to improve English for the local tourism context even as they go about building their learning skills in general. There are several ways I intend to address this.

First, as mentioned, the focus will be on explicitly teaching EIL. Setting intelligibility and acceptability to international speakers as the goal makes “speaking English” achievable. For example, using Jenkins’ Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2000) as a guide for teaching pronunciation focuses attention on those areas that are both

necessary for intelligibility and actually teachable, allowing learners to get what they actually need from more focused and limited instruction time. Focusing on the most necessary and relevant aspects of the language according to EIL standards and the local tourism context will more quickly give learners a working foundation and the confidence to use it; along with better critical thinking skills, an understanding of the experiential learning process, and an encouraging community they will need only limited language instruction in order to become independent and capable at using the resources and opportunities around them.

Because learners here frequently know more than they let on, but struggle with shyness, they will want opportunities to practice conversation skills. We can do this in an immersion format, allowing participants to schedule around individual half-day or day-long English-only immersion events. This will help build courage and the agility and improvisational ability so needed in the tourism context while allowing them to ask questions and get feedback. Isolating “English-only” to immersion settings also avoids putting English above other languages. In general, while learners will be encouraged to make use of their new language skills as much as possible, plurilingualism will be valued and use of Portuguese will not be discouraged.

Conclusion: Putting Ideas into Practice

Implementation of this project is still in the very early stages. I have begun simply by talking about what I would like to do differently in terms of teaching, and following the conversations. One conversation led to a partnership with a friend in which we planned an English movie night with related activities following the movie. We hope to make it a

regular event, encouraging both the idea that language practice can be fun and that small changes - such as making a habit of watching movies subtitled instead of dubbed - can make a big difference in learning outcomes. Another conversation led to the formation of an independent French study group. Although the participants have varying levels of French proficiency, none of us are very fluent. The study group is a way to make independent study social and fun, while helping each other and exploring the experiential learning process. For me, it is also a laboratory to see what sort of support and guidance might be needed to help other peer-led groups be successful in the future.

Other conversations have served to expand my vision of the various aspects of the project. These include, for example, the content of workshops and courses, community building and the development of communication channels within the community, tiers of training and support that to engage community members in helping each other, the management of physical and digital resources, determining which organizational structure (nonprofit, for profit, cooperative) will best support this community given the unfamiliar landscape of Brazilian bureaucracy, and the design of a physical space to serve as a central work, play, study and gathering place.

As I look at the scope of the project, I remind myself that it will be a place for me to practice the same skills - creativity, risk-taking, communication skills, intentional habit formation, asking for help, developing an internal barometer of what makes sense, accommodating to others - that community members will be developing as they study languages and participate in the development of the community. I am no more of an

expert than anyone else. However, as I cycle through the learning process I will be more able to model the change I want to see.

This is really the starting place - collaborating with others in small next steps, and then modeling and sharing my own reflective process about the experience while encouraging others to do the same. The leap from where many people are in terms of assumptions around and experience of language learning to where I hope we can go is enormous; we will only get there by taking small steps and modeling those steps for others, so they can begin to glimpse the possibilities.

I genuinely believe that this change is possible. I believe that the spark that allows us to engage deeply and pleasurably with the learning process is inherent to being human. I see it alive and well outside the realm of formal education, and I have seen it flare when I describe this project to people who have asked me about English classes. People ask me for classes because they haven't been able to imagine another option, but they seem ready to try something the new when I suggest it. The next step is to invite people to take a leap into this experiment with me, and trust the learning process to lead us to an approach to language learning that serves everyone better than the repressive models of the past.

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