Paula Eduarda Michels

"*THE ENGLISH(ES) IN ME*": INVESTIGATING MEANINGS OF ENGLISH AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN NARRATIVES OF BRAZILIAN STUDENTS

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Orientadora: Profª. Drª. Gloria Gil

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Esta Dissertação foi julgada adequada para obtenção do Título de "Mestre em Letras", e aprovada em sua forma final pelo Programa de Pós-Graduação em Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários.

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To everyone who is willing to share their knowledge and open their hearts.

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ABSTRACT

The status of English as an international language and the recognition of its multiple and cross-cultural uses around the world has been widely discussed in the area of applied linguistics. Taking into account the decentering of English and the need for recognizing the multiple social identities of its speakers, and considering that it is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self and their relationship to the world (Norton, 2000), this study investigated the meanings and values attributed to English by a group of 16 students entering the English Language and Literature undergraduate program at UFSC, as well as their cultural identification with the language and the ways in which they construct their identities as English speakers. The research method followed a qualitative interpretive approach based on narrative inquiry (Riessman, 2008). The narratives in question were constructed during individual semi-structured interviews and later transcribed for thematic analysis. The results discussion showed that: (i) the meanings and values attributed to English by the participants indicate that they assume a symbolic value much higher than their instrumental or material worth, ranging from the possibility of becoming global citizens to receiving social and personal recognition; (ii) their cultural identifications demonstrate that most participants still represent English as belonging to Kachru (1985)'s inner-circle countries, although they recognize plurality and identify themselves culturally with English-related elements, alongside with elements from their local cultures; (iii) in view of their performances in different English-speaking communities - mainly virtual ones - participants seem to be developing themselves as legitimate users of English; however, some of them still do not perceive themselves as 'English speakers'. In this sense, this study also sought to contribute to the English teaching reflective practice, as it stresses the importance of getting to know students' identity constructions and of expanding cultural and linguistic models of English so that learners recognize themselves as legitimate members of the global community of English speakers/users.

Keywords: English. Identity. Culture. Representation. Narrative Inquiry.

RESUMO

O status da língua inglesa como língua internacional e o reconhecimento de seus usos múltiplos e transculturais ao redor do mundo vem sendo amplamente discutidos na área de linguística aplicada. Assim, considerando a descentralização da língua inglesa e a necessidade de atentar para as múltiplas identidades sociais de seus falantes, e tendo também em vista que é através da linguagem que um indivíduo negocia um senso de si mesmo e de como se relaciona com o mundo (NORTON, 2000), esta pesquisa buscou investigar os significados e valores atribuídos à língua inglesa por um grupo de 16 estudantes ingressantes no curso de Letras – Inglês da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC), bem como suas identificações culturais com relação à língua e a maneira em que constroem suas identidades como falantes de inglês. O método da pesquisa orientou-se por uma abordagem qualitativa interpretativa, com base na investigação narrativa (RIESSMAN, 2008). As narrativas em questão foram construídas durante entrevistas individuais semiestruturadas e posteriormente transcritas para análise temática. A discussão dos resultados levantou que: (i) os significados e valores atribuídos pelos participantes à língua inglesa indicam que esta assume, para eles, um valor simbólico muito maior que o seu valor instrumental ou material, que vai da possibilidade de circular como cidadãos globais ao reconhecimento social e pessoal; (ii) suas identificações culturais demonstram que a maioria dos participantes ainda representa o inglês como pertencente aos países do círculo interno de Kachru (1985), muito embora reconheçam a pluralidade e se identifiquem culturalmente com elementos da língua inglesa, juntamente com elementos de suas culturas locais; (iii) tendo em vista suas performances em diferentes comunidades de língua inglesa – principalmente as virtuais – os participantes aparentam estar se desenvolvendo enquanto legítimos usuários da língua; no entanto, alguns ainda não se percebem como 'falantes de inglês'. Nesse sentido, este estudo buscou também trazer contribuições para a reflexão pedagógica do ensino de inglês, tendo em vista a importância de se conhecer as construções identitárias dos estudantes e de expandir os modelos culturais e linguísticos apresentados para que estes se reconheçam como membros legítimos da comunidade global de falantes/usuários de inglês.

Palavras-Chave: Língua Inglesa. Identidade. Cultura. Representação. Investigação Narrativa.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The interaction among languages and cultures is becoming ever more fluid in the contemporary reality, as we witness social, political and economic transformations linked to the phenomena of globalization, the widespread migration, the ever-developing media technologies and, more recently, the rise of virtual communities. These transformations have led to significant changes in the world traversed by the language learner, characterized by linguistic and sociocultural diversity and fluidity, "where language use, ethnicity, identity and hybridity have become complex topical issues and the subject of significant attention" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, p. 1).

This is especially true when it comes to the English language, whose status as an international language and the recognition of its multiple, cross-cultural uses around the world are now widely discussed. In fact, research indicates that native speakers of English have been outnumbered by speakers who do not have English as their first language, what confers to this language distinct characteristics in relation to others (Kachru, 2006). This has led to questions about the ownership of the language, and, for many, English should no longer be viewed as attached to a specific culture or nation (Ryan, 2012). Following a similar path, many researchers in the field of applied linguistics argue that the focus in additional language teaching and learning should now be placed not on the "native speaker" – a concept that Kramsch (1999) already considered outdated and inappropriate - but on the "intercultural speaker" (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013), that is, one that is able to mediate "between different perspectives and cultures, rather than to replace one's native language and culture with 'target' ones" (Zhu Hua, 2013, p. 9). This opens space for the decentering of English and for the recognition of the multiple social identities of its speakers.

If we consider language as the place where our subjectivity is constructed – "it is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self" (Norton, 2010, p. 5), then we can understand that, when language learners speak, "they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world" (Saraceni, 2010, p. 18). Hence, as identity construction is shaped by language, a growing body of research in language learning has focused on the

symbolic aspects of language (Baum, 2014), on the identities of teachers, student-teachers and learners as viewed by themselves (Norton, 2000; Clemente & Higgins, 2008; Fichtner & Chapman, 2011; Souza, 2012; Gil & Oliveira, 2014; Carazzai, 2013; Souza, 2017; to name a few) and on their representations regarding language and cultures (Pallú, 2008; Luis, 2012; Hamilton, 2013; Bêrredo, 2015; among others). The study conducted by Baum (2014), for instance, investigated how the feelings of preservice teachers towards the English language and its perceived cultures were related to the enrichment of their self-identities[1].

Identity is defined by Norton (2000) as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 5). Bearing this in mind, another important concept when dealing with additional language learning is that of investment (Norton, 2000), which refers to the efforts made by learners to acquire a second language and its cultural capital, whether material or symbolic, which are at the same time an investment in their own socio-cultural identity (Gil & Oliveira, 2014). Learning English, in this sense, can greatly involve this sort of investment, especially due to its status and significance in the global context.

Carazzai (2013), who has conducted a study on the process of identity (re)construction of Brazilian English learners, has pointed out that, when comparing the amount of investigations on language teachers and learners, there seems to be more research on teachers' identities than on learners, and that, in general, most studies on students' identities and language learning, published in the past years, were conducted in English speaking countries, where English was taught as a second language and not as a foreign or additional language in the context of the students' homelands. Hence the importance of contributing with further research to understand how English language learners in different contexts are viewing English and how they are constructing their identities as English users.

Based on all the above, the objective of this research is to investigate the meanings and values attributed to English by a group of

[1] Baum makes use of Anthony Giddens (1991) definition of self-identity: "The self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography", created in constant, dynamic relation to local and global contexts (Giddens, 1991, p. 53).

students entering the English Language and Literature undergraduate program at UFSC, Santa Catarina, Brazil, their cultural identification with the language and the ways in which they construct their identities as English speakers/users.

1.1. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study may provide insights and contribute to the understanding of the socio-cultural constructions of Brazilian English learners who are on the path to become teachers or professionals of the language. It may also be important for teachers and professors to understand these constructions and try to incorporate students' experiences in their classes and curriculum, as well as to raise their awareness for the heterogeneity of English uses and speakers around the world and for the intercultural aspects of language learning.

1.2. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this research is to investigate the meanings and values attributed to English by a group of students entering the English Language and Literature undergraduate program at UFSC, Santa Catarina, Brazil, their cultural identification with the language and the ways in which they construct their identities as English speakers/users. More specifically, this study attempts to:

- explore students' representations of English, identifying the meanings and symbolic values it carries for them, which are closely related to their learning investments;

- identify students' representations of English-related cultures, exploring their understandings of culture and analyzing whether and in what ways they see themselves taking part of them;

- analyze the ways in which participants position themselves as English speakers/users in the world, taking into account their agency as language users.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the previous objectives, the following research questions guided the investigation:

1) What are the meanings and values that English carry for the participants?

2) How are English-related cultures represented by participants and in what ways do they identify with them?

3) How do participants position themselves as English speakers/users in the world**?**

1.4. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

In the following chapters, I present a review of literature covering the conceptual understandings of language, culture and representation; a discussion on the meanings of English in the global context; and some considerations on the matters of identity, investment and agency, all related to language learning (chapter 2); then I present the study's methodological framework and data generation procedures (chapter 3); the data analysis and discussion (chapter 4); and the final remarks which include some of the pedagogical implications and limitations of the present research (chapter 5).

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. UNDERSTANDINGS OF LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND REPRESENTATION

This section aims to clarify what is understood by language, culture and representation in the scope of this study. It also indicates some of their implications for language learning.

2.1.1. Language as 'social practice'

Language is viewed here as "a social practice of meaning-making and interpretation" (Liddicoat & Sacarino, 2013, p. 15). This means that it is fundamentally dialogic, in the sense that, as the cultural theorist Stuart Hall argues, it is neither the property of the sender nor of the receiver of meanings. Language is rather a shared cultural 'space' (Hall, 1997). In the same way, it is not seen as a prior system specifically tied to ethnicity, territory, birth, or nation (Pennycook, 2004), for it emerges from social interactions that cross these categories and go beyond a geographical location (Makoni & Pennycook, 2006).

Also through this perspective, language is the place where our sense of ourselves – our subjectivity – is constructed (Norton Pierce, 1995) in dialog with the others. It is therefore "an integral part of acting and being in the world" (Liddicoat & Sacarino, 2013, p. 15). Having such a power, it is important to bear in mind that language can be a locus of social organization, power, and individual consciousness, and a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991). In this sense, rather than ontological categories, languages are in fact political practices (Pennycook, 2006).

2.1.2. Culture as 'shared meanings'

Culture, according to Hall (1997) is one of the most difficult concepts in the human and social sciences. For a long time, the debate about culture was centered on the distinction between high and popular culture, which placed emphasis on cultural *products*, like music, film and literature. In more recent years, within the social sciences, culture has been used to relate to the distinct "way of life" of a particular society, community, or social group. To put it simply, culture can be understood as the "shared meanings" (Hall, 1997) between the members of a particular group.

Hall (1997) indicates that such shared meanings include concepts, ideas, feelings and emotions, which organize and regulate social practices in such a way that they influence our conduct and have real, practical effects. Cultures are then created through the actions of individuals, but particularly through the ways in which they use language (Liddicoat and Sacarino, 2013). As the privileged medium in which we 'make sense' of things, language is thus central to culture and is the "key repository of cultural values and meanings" (Hall, 1997, p.1).

Liddicoat and Sacarino (2013) highlight that an important feature of culture is that it is a set of practices which are always dynamic and emergent, and that vary across time, place, and identity categories, like gender, ethnicity and sexuality. Opposed to the essentialist view of culture – which sets culture within defined geographic borders and reduces it to recognizable and often stereotypical representations of national attributes –, in the perspective of culture as dynamic practices, the notion of identity becomes a more central concept. The authors argue that culture is "a framework in which the individual achieves his/her sense of identity based on the way a cultural group understands the choices made by members, which become a resource for the presentation of the self" (Liddicoat & Sacarino, 2013, p. 22). Such a framework is not straightforward, for cultural identities are multiple, fluid and, as suggested before, not fixed in terms of national or other affiliations, for "they grow out of participation in interaction with groups of others" (Liddicoat & Sacarino, 2013, p. 21).

Recognizing that culture is multidimensional, we find communities whose practices vary widely and members who affiliate with multiple groups. This recognition is ever stronger in present time given the state of connectedness of our world, in which no culture exists

in isolation (Piller, 2007). Piller argues that all cultures, whether they are viewed as nation, as ethnicity, as faith, or others, have in common that they are "imagined communities" (Anderson, 2006/1983), in the sense that "members of a culture imagine themselves and are imagined by others as group members" (Piller, 2007, p. 2011), for these groups are too large to be 'real' groups. Because of this, Piller finds that culture is best understood as a *discursive* construction, in the sense that people do not *have* culture, but rather they *construct* it discursively.

Finally, Hall (1997) stresses that culture has an interpretive nature: "to say that two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves (…) in ways which will be understood by each other" (p. 2). As culture is about "shared meanings", in order to *communicate* these meanings, participants in a group must be able to use the same linguistic codes. They must, in a broad sense, "speak the same language" (Hall, 1997, p. 4) – language understood here in a wider sense that includes visual images, sounds, or body expressions which are capable of carrying and expressing meaning.

2.1.3. Representation as the 'embodying of concepts, ideas and emotions'

I draw again on Hall (1997) to discuss the concept of representation, which is defined by the author as "the embodying of concepts, ideas and emotions in a symbolic form which can be transmitted and meaningfully interpreted" (p. 10). Basically, representation is the production of meaning through language, and, hence, it is one of the central practices that produce culture.

According to Hall, we give things meaning by how we *represent* them, that is, by "the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, the values we place on them" (Hall, 1997, p.3). This means that we give things meaning by the framework of interpretation we bring to them. We also give them meaning by "how we use them, or integrate them into our everyday practices" (Hall, 1997, p. 3). So representations are symbolic, but they do have real material and social effects, for signs can regulate social behavior.

Another important feature of representation is that it is dialogic: "the 'taking of meaning' is as much a signifying practice as the 'putting into meaning'" (Hall, 1997, p. 10). In this sense, the speaker and the hearer – or the writer and the reader – are active participants in a process which is always double-sided and interactive. What sustains this dialogue, according to Hall, is the presence of shared cultural codes, which, however, cannot guarantee that meanings will remain stable forever (Hall, 1997). Meanings are therefore never finally fixed: they change and shift with context, usage and historical circumstances. They are also deeply inscribed in relations of power, for meanings can "define what is 'normal', who belongs – and therefore, who is excluded" (Hall, 1997, p. 10) – these same meanings, however, can be fought over and contested.

Hall (1997) stresses that there are always "different circuits of meaning circulating in any culture at the same time, overlapping discursive formations, from which we draw to create meaning or to express what we think" (p. 10). Some of these different representations are reinforced by traditions. They are also propelled by the media, which influence the way people see things and accept things, as Moscovici (2003, as cited in Souza, 2012) highlights. Representations are finally tied up with the issue of how culture is used to mark out and maintain identity, for meaning "is what gives us a sense of our own identity, of who we are and with whom we 'belong'" (Hall, 1997, p. 3).

2.1.4. Implications for language learning

Some last words in this section are dedicated to the implications of the preceding discussions for language learning.

If language learning is focused on the creation of meaning and interpretation, Liddicoat and Sacarino (2013) suggest that language is learned "as a system of personal engagement with a new world, where learners necessarily engage with diversity at a personal level" (p. 15). The authors defend that adding a language and culture to an individual's repertoire expands complexity and generates new possibilities for acting in the world.

Such expansion calls for a mediation between languages and cultures, one that affects learner's own identity as a user of another language, for "acquiring a second or third language (…) seems not merely to represent different ways of communicating with others, but to change

the most intimate relationship they have to themselves" (Kanno, 2003, p. 5).

This mediation is facilitated through the development of an intercultural competence, which means "being aware that cultures are relative (…), being aware that there is no one "normal" way of doing things, but that all behaviors are culturally variable" (Liddicoat & Sacarino, 2013, p. 24) In this sense, Crozet et. al (1999) signal the importance of an intercultural approach to language teaching based on "a renewed understanding of the nature of cross-cultural encounters and a deeper understanding of the links between language and culture" (p. 19).

Interculturality in language learning thus represents a pedagogy which defends that the goal of language learning is the mediation between different perspectives and cultures, rather than the replacement of one's native language and culture with 'target' ones (Zhu, 2013). This view of the intercultural takes into account the students' own cultures and "places learners as language users and social actors at the center of language learning" (Liddicoat & Sacarino, 2013, p. 29).

2.2. GLOBALIZATION, MEANINGS OF ENGLISH, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

This section discusses the effects of globalization on cultural identities, the meanings of English in this context, and some implications for English language learning in current days.

2.2.1. The context of globalization

Globalization is not a recent phenomenon. Its tendencies are deeply rooted in modern times, but were intensified in the late 20th century (Hall, 2006/1992). The term is commonly used to refer to those social processes that cross national borders, integrating distant communities in new space-time combinations and making the world more interconnected. In the globalized world, groups are "no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogeneous", in the words of Appadurai (1991, p. 191, as cited in Moita Lopes, 2008, p. 313) – although, as Moita Lopes questions, people may never have been homogeneous from a cultural perspective.

Having evolved across time – through colonization processes, industrial revolutions, world wars and mass migrations –, the current phase of globalization has the internet as its most distinctive feature (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). As communication patterns changed dramatically, Blommaert (2012) calls attention to people's changed "capacity to maintain virtual networks and communities, to circulate, produce and absorb information, and to engage in entirely new forms of social interaction such as in social media and mass online gaming" (Bloomaert, 2012, p. 9). Today, six years after Bloomaert's paper, this capacity is even more prominent, as a great number of people in urban places now carry smartphones all around and find themselves online most part of the day. In this new configuration, the global has more than ever interpenetrated the local, and "the world inhabits our own neighbourhoods" (Canagarajah, 2010, p 18)[2].

Of relevance to this study is Hall (2006/1992)'s theorization on how cultural identities are affected by the features of globalization, especially the ones resulting in the compression of distances and time-scales. According to Hall, several theorists argue that the globalizing processes have led to a loosening of strong identifications with national cultures and a strengthening of other cultural ties and allegiances, which are "above" and "below" the level of the nation-state. Following Hall's ideas, cultural globalization has a pluralizing effect over identities, producing a variety of new and hybrid identification possibilities and making identities "more positional, more political, more plural and diverse; less fixed, unified, or trans-historical" (Hall, 2006/1992, p. 87).

Moving to the role of English in this process, its presence in international communication has for long been largely acknowledge, and so has its historical association with ruling economic powers and cultural domination. However, in his attempt to re-describe the relationship between English and globalization, Moita Lopes (2008) discusses it as a "border language", through which people can "appropriate global discourses and reinvent local life in their everyday performances" (p.

[2] We should not disregard, however, that several people around the world still do not have access to the internet, especially in developing countries (in 2017, according to the ITU statistics, only about 40% of the people in developing countries were internet users, and less than 50% in the world in general). Still, the effects of globalization and current technologies are felt worldwide.

309, my translation). In this context, rather than homogenizing cultures, English can be a site for discursive heterogeneity (Moita Lopes, 2008).

2.2.2. Meanings of English

The history of English – with the expansion of the British empire until the 18th century and later the rise of the U.S. as a leading power after World War II - has led it to be increasingly used around the world as either *first language* – the main language that is shared within a group, *second language* – meaning a language that is not the main one spoken, but is widely used as a medium of communication; or as a *foreign language* - understood as a language aimed at communication with outside speakers. Thus, in his attempt to call attention to the effects of this spread around the world, Kachru (1985 as cited in Kachru, 2006) designed a seminal model of English use contexts, represented in three concentric circles: (i) the Inner Circle (e.g. Great Britain, the USA), where English functions primarily as a first language in the majority of cases; (ii) the Outer Circle (e.g., India, Nigeria), formed mostly by postcolonial countries, where English is used as an institutionalized additional language; and (iii) the Expanding Circle (e.g., China, Brazil), where English is used primarily as a foreign language.

Kachru's model has received a number of criticism along the years, especially for locating the native speaker in its center and for being inadequate to capture the complexity of Englishes, as it leaves out the social differences within the circles and the many hybrid forms of local Englishes (Pennycook, 2006). However, Moita Lopes (2008) points out that the model has contributed largely to inaugurate a perspective that takes into account the English of the borders, and it is still a reference for the discussion of the World English paradigm – according to which "most speakers of English are non-native speakers, and all English varieties, native or non-native, are accepted in their own right rather than evaluated against a NSE [native speaker English] benchmark" (Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011, p. 283). In fact, citing McArthur (1993), Kachru (2005) sustains that the concentric circles model allows for shadings and overlaps among the circles, and, although the labels "inner" and "outer" inevitably imply a historical priority, the model "suggests mobility and flux and implies that a new history is in the making" (McArthur, 1993, p. 334, as cited in Kachru, 2005, p. 13).

Upon discussing the need of a new paradigm for English, Saraceni (2009) reminds us that the evolution of English is progressing in a complex manner which cuts across borders. Young users of English around the world are mixing global and local norms freely, in a world where "pop music, the internet, online chatting and email are all contributing to forging dynamically negotiated forms of English" (Saraceni, 2009, p. 183). In this transcultural context, Saraceni argues that there are powerful forces in operation worldwide "which are centrifugal and centripetal at the same time and which escape any easy description" (Saraceni, 2009, p. 183). Even so, the recognition of diverse uses of English worldwide has given way to new terms in poststructuralist theories of language that attempt to reflect its status, such as *English as an international language* (ELF), *English as a lingua franca* (ELF), *World English* (WE), *World Englishes* (WEs), and *English as an additional language* (EAL), this later consisting of a recent teaching perspective in Brazil (Jordão, 2014). There is an extensive discussion on the meaning and appropriateness of each of these terms, but what is common about them is that they put in question the "ownership" of English, aiming to detach the language from the center.

The assertion that no one has any privileged status and English belongs to everyone who speaks it in whatever way (Rajagopalan, 2009) is nevertheless controversial in real life practices and discourses. Pennycook (2006), for instance, argues that the notion of 'English as an International Language' as something natural, neutral and beneficial, is a myth: it carries the idea that English promises social and economic development to all those who learn it, instead of being tied to particular class positions, and that it is a language of equal opportunities, rather than a language that creates barriers as much as it presents possibilities (Pennycook, 2006). The author also argues that the identification of English along national borders – which is common in the World English paradigm –, using modifiers like Nigerian, Indian, or Singaporean English, suggests that these varieties are different from 'proper' English, what can work to reaffirm the marginalization of users of English from non-Inner-Circle countries instead of placing them all in equal terms.

In fact, societies grant differential power and values to languages (Kanno, 2003), conceding to their speakers more or less cultural capital accordingly. In this sense, languages are not socially equal (Bourdieu, 1977), and, although English is not in itself superior to any other language, it is undeniably in a different position from other languages, being as it is connected to globalization (Jordão, 2014). Based on Kachru (1998), Jordão (2004) draws on the concepts of *mantra* – meaning – and

madhyama – message – to explain that, within its multiple identities, English assumes functional connotations as a means of international communication (*madhyama*), while it carries with it the *mantras* that inform the cultural, political and ideological attitudes of the communities that make use of English. In this sense, cultural effects from colonialism walk together with English in the three concentric circles proposed by Kachru. In Brazil, for instance, according to Jordão (2004), English is still seen as a language owned by the Inner-circle countries, accompanied by a *mantra* that is loaded with cultural, historical, moral and economical superiority; one that presents English as the language of superior cultures and of the truly scientific and reliable knowledge. At the same time, it is presented as the necessary language to speak to the world, an instrumental *madhyama* that would allow communication with humanity in general, as if it could release us from the plague caused by the Babel Tower collapse and the multiplication of languages (Jordão, 2004, p. 5).

Although the discussion on the suitability of definitions like *World English* or *English as a Lingua Franca* is vast, for Saraceni (2009), the question 'which English?' is found to be ultimately irrelevant when considering "the complexity of the ways in which users of English stretch and reforge this language" and how they negotiate meaning dynamically (p. 184). With a focus on English as a product of the will to certain goods and identities, Pennycook (2006) claims that what is actually important to understand is not "this 'thing' 'English' that does or does not do things to and for people, but rather the multiple investments people bring to their acts, desires and performances" in that language (Pennycook, 2006, p. 111). In Saraceni (2009)'s words, "English is, and should be, in the hands of its users" (p. 184).

2.2.3. Implications for English language learning

The issues discussed in this section have direct implications for language teaching and learning. A first implication is that the teaching of *English* (or any other language) *as a Foreign Language* (EFL), meaning a language that is not used as the means of communication among learners in the communities they circulate, becomes questionable. First, because, as learners have increasing access to the internet and engage in multimodal literacy practices in English, the communities they circulate are difficult to define and the understanding of "foreign" as "distant" is

hard to sustain (Jordão, 2014). Second, because, for many scholars involved in the study of *English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF) (e.g. Seidlhofer, 2011, Jenkins, 2007, as cited in Jordão, 2014), EFL denotes a context of submission to native speakers, and this has implications on the way learners admire and reproduce cultures related to the major native English speaking countries, which are often signified as superior in comparison to their own.

Bearing this in mind, a paradigm shift in English Language Teaching (ELT) has been advocated to take into account the otherwise complex reality of English worldwide (Saraceni, 2009). In this new paradigm (sustained by researchers such as Kachru, 2005; Canagarajah, 2007; Jenkins, Baker, & Dewey, 2018; and others), native speakers of English are no longer regarded as "the sole repository of truth about language" and the distinction between native and non-native speakers is "downplayed as irrelevant and unhelpful" (Saraceni, 2009, p. 177)[3]. Detaching English from Anglo-Saxon culture, the cultural component of ELT should then look to other – local as well as global – cultures as reference points. In this sense, opposed to the notion of EFL, the term English as an Additional Language (EAL) has been gaining popularity in Brazil. By using EAL, we are usually referring to a language that can be part of learners' "own linguistic repertoire", an "expression of their own culture", spoken "with a local flavour or international intelligibility according to the situation" (Saraceni, 2009, p. 184). Learners are then invited to use the additional language for participating in their own societies as well as for speaking up as global citizens.

However, although this shift has been advocated by researchers for some time now, it is important to point out, as Carazzai (2013) carefully observes, that this understanding does not necessarily reflect students' and teachers' views around the world, and more specifically in Brazil. She argues that "there may be many contexts in which both students and teachers still view English as a foreign language and do not feel that they have appropriated the language" (p. 36). So the impact of academic debate on actual language teaching practice seems to have been marginal in recent years (Saraceni, 2009). Another relevant issue to bear in mind

[3] Cook's (1992, 1999) theory of multicompetence, for instance, offers a compelling alternative to this duality. His theory allows the possibility of learners to construct themselves as multicompetent, legitimate users of English, and as bilingual and multilingual persons, rather than as failed, non-native speakers of the target language (Pavlenko, 2003).

is that (neo)colonial powers attached to English do not stop existing only because postcolonial theories have attempted to denounce them (Jordão, 2014). The author suggests that using more neutral terms like EAL or ELF may silent these power relations and try to mask the positioning of the subjects who are recognized as owners or not of the cultural capital associated with English.

Finally, drawing once more on Jordão (2004), instead of conveying the impression of a tacit worldwide acceptance of the position of English as a lingua franca:

> English used especially in the "expanding circle" can be conceived, taught and studied as a contested space of communication between people (…) who, strategically using English as *mandyama* to communicate with one another, are able to be themselves in English, that is, to elaborate their identities by confronting culturally different interpretive procedures and transforming themselves in the process (2004, p. 5, my translation).

In this sense, the way learners and teachers understand the position of English in society and the way they activate their (de)identifications with the language also inform their identity constructions (Jordão, 2014). This matter of identity in relation to language is further explored in the next section.

2.3. IDENTITY, INVESTMENT AND AGENCY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

In connection with the preceding discussion, this third section defines and discusses the concepts of identity, investment and agency within a language learning perspective, so as to better understand the narratives that compose this study.

2.3.1. Identity

The topic of identity has been heavily researched in a number of disciplines and fields, including social psychology, anthropology, cultural studies and applied linguistics, to name a few (Zhu, 2003). Particularly, researchers in the field of language teaching and learning have attempted to understand what identity is, how it relates to larger society, and especially how it affects the language learning process (Silva & Gil, 2012). In few words, Kanno (2003) understands identity as "a sense of who we are and our relationship to the world" (p. 3), which is based upon many aspects of our "selves", including race, gender, class, occupation, sexual orientation, age, among others, which, in their turn, may become more salient or not depending on the context.

Identity is then constructed through the complex interactions between people and the social contexts that surround them. According to Hall (2006/1992), we are constantly confronted by a range of different identities, each appealing to different parts of ourselves, from which it seems possible to choose. The categorization of cultural identities, however, is not subject to self-selection only, but also to ascription-by-others (Zhu, 2013). In this sense, the way we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems that surround us have a strong impact on the way we build our sense of selves. Identity is thus finally seen as multiple, a site of struggle, and always subject to change (Norton Peirce, 1995).

In the context of additional language learning, Ricento (2005) understands identity as "a contingent process involving dialectic relations between learners and the various worlds and experiences they inhabit and which act on them" (p. 895). This view corroborates the understanding that "individuals can identify with, or be identified with particular cultural systems to a greater of lesser extent, but individuals are members of a great many social groups, including, potentially, multiple cultural systems" (Baker, 2015, p. 107). The language learner is then a social actor who acts upon different identity positions that may be institutionally and culturally situated, but also dynamic and individually interpreted (Coffey & Street, 2008). In connecting learning to the experience of identity, Wenger (1998) argues that "learning is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming" (Wenger, 1998, p. 215). In this sense, we learn skills and information – and languages – not as ends in themselves, but in the service of an identity: "it is in the formation of

an identity that learning can become a source of meaningfulness and of personal and social energy", Wenger (1988, p. 215) completes.

According to Kanno (2003), an indispensable part of what shapes our identities is group membership. Such membership can be related to concrete, tangible groups such as neighborhoods or workplaces, but also to broader linguistic and cultural affiliations. Hence, learning a language is also connected to the desire to participate in shared practices of a community, which may not necessarily be concrete, but *imagined*. Following Wenger (1998)'s definition, imagination is "a process of expanding oneself by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves" (p. 176). The concept of *imagined communities*, in its turn, was coined by Anderson (2006/1983) when analyzing the idea of nation as imagination with all its ideological and identitary implications, but has been expanded to refer to all the groups of people that are not immediately tangible but with whom we connect through the power of imagination (Norton & Kanno, 2003). These include the groups language learners associate to a particular target language, forming a desired community that may offer them possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options in the future (Norton & Toohey, 2011).

Hence, as Norton & Kanno (2003) defend, these imagined communities "are no less real than the ones in which learners have daily engagement and might even have a stronger impact on their current actions and investment" (Norton & Kanno, 2003, p. 242). The authors point out that the technological advances from the past decades have had a significant impact on what is possible to imagine, as the internet and media allows connections among people thousands of miles apart. In this sense, based on other researchers (Kramsch & Lam, 1999; Grossberg, 1997), Kanno (2003) suggests that it is not *where* people belong that is important, but rather *how* they are attached and attach themselves affectively in the world (p. 12). Identity is then understood not simply as a process of socialization into existing social groups, but also as a "reflective and generative process for constructing alternative social networks and subject positions", often through textual media (Lam, 2000, p. 476).

It is important to bear in mind that, even at the personal level, imagination is nonetheless associated with social ideologies and hegemonies, for society can constrain an individual's capacity to imagine a different future (Norton & Kanno, 2003). Even so, the notion of imagined communities can provide a theoretical framework for the exploration of creativity, hope and desire in identity construction (Norton & Kanno, 2003). To Norton and Toohey (2011), a learner's hopes for the

future are an integral part of language learner identity, and a leaner's investment in the target language is to be understood within this context.

2.3.2. Investment

Norton (2000) proposes understanding one's desire and commitment to learn a language in terms of investment. Informed by readings in social theory and based on Bourdieu (1977)'s notion of cultural capital, the concept of investment intends to capture the complex relationship of the language learner to the changing social world. It works as an alternative to the instrumental concept of motivation, generally understood as a fixed personality trait of the language learner regardless of the situation. Norton argues that when learners invest in a language, "they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will enhance their cultural capital, their identity and their desires for the future" (2000, p. 10). Examples of potential symbolic resources, in this sense, are education, friendship, recognition, voice (Norton Pierce, 1995; Kanno, 2003), whereas material resources include capital goods, jobs, money. Learners expect to have a good return on such investment, as it will give them access to otherwise unattainable resources (Norton Pierce, 1995, p. 17).

From this perspective, the construct of investment signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language (Silva & Gil, 2012). As English is often associated to economic capital, global citizenship, cultural superiority, among other factors, Clemente and Higgins (2008) point out that how well people "can perform English provides them with the means to accumulate various forms of (…) capital" (p. 32). However, these resources are not equally distributed. As Bourdieu (1977) reminds us, language is an instrument of power, so people have differential rights to speech. He draws on the distinction between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' speakers, arguing that an utterance's value and meaning is determined in part by the value and meaning ascribed to the person who speaks. In the context of English, for instance, 'native speakers' and 'non-native speakers' may be ascribed different values in global interactions, although these values may change according to the circumstance. In this sense, an investment in language learning can also be an investment in claiming the right to speak, for "it is through language that a learner gains access to, or is denied access to,

powerful social networks that give learners the opportunity to speak" (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 417).

2.3.3. Agency

This leads to a final theoretical discussion relevant to this study, which is that of agency in language learning. According to Kalaja, Barcelos, Aro, & Ruohotie-Lyhty (2015), the term is a relative newcomer in language teaching and learning research. Within a poststructuralist perspective, agency is seen as "the ability to act upon our identities in relation to the discursive possibilities that are culturally available at each given moment" (Silva, 2014). Sociocultural theories have thus located agency in the interplay between the individual and the social (Kalaja et al., 2015). This approach acknowledges the importance of agency development in the additional language learning process, which has to do with the appropriation of others' discourses and with "making them one's own with our individual accents, desires, and actions" (Vitanova, 2002, p. 41).

Studies have revealed the importance of learners' agency in shaping their own learning and participation (Deters, 2011). In this sense, it is important to acknowledge that the influence of the community–individual interaction is not unidirectional: not only "our community participation affect our sense of who we are, but also, (…) we have the ability to shape the nature of the communities to which we belong" (Kanno, 2003, p. 13). In exploring bilingual and bicultural identities, Kanno highlights the importance of individual bilinguals[4]' agency to make choices about how to belong and how to resist and negotiate identities. As Donato (2000) puts, a central concern in sociocultural theory is that language learners actively transform their world instead of merely conforming to it (p. 46). With all that has been said, we can consider that English does feature a number of possibilities for learners

[4] Following Pavlenko (2003), a bilingual person can be "anyone who uses more than one language for particular purposes at some point in their daily lives". This definition is not based on either proficiency or chronology and encompasses all who live through the means of more than one language (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 262). Along this work, I usually refer to a person with these characteristics as a multilingual person.

to act in the world and to construct new – often imagined – identities to themselves.

2.4. RELATED STUDIES

Research on students' and student teachers' identities and on their representations of culture and language – particularly English – has grown in the past years. In this last section, I review some of the investigations published in the field, as their findings might give contributions to the reading of this study.

In Brazil, a number of studies deal with students' and student-teachers' representations of English, such as the one reported by Souza (2017), who conducted reflective sessions with 12 participants from a technical degree program in Paraná in order to understand the complex relation of these students to the English language. He found that the participants' representations were mostly anchored on music, communication and work, being communication the most controversial category, since students manifested the desire of speaking English but avoided exposure for fear of being judged. In interviewing some of the participants, Souza observed that students represented themselves mostly as students able to learn the language (beyond the classroom), but not yet as language users.

Some other studies are particularly concerned with representations of culture, like the one proposed by Luis (2012), who investigated UFSC English undergraduate students' representations about culture and culture learning in an attempt to understand the role of culture in foreign language education. Through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and email correspondences, she observed that students represented culture in mainly two ways - as formal and valued knowledge or as sociocultural practices. In discussing her findings, Luis claimed for the importance of making students aware of the fluid and changeable nature of culture and of the social construction of meanings which makes language and culture intrinsically related.

In a wider study, Hamilton (2013) investigated students' representations in association with teachers' and textbooks' representations in the context of a language school linked to an undergraduate program in Brasilia. By means of classroom observations, questionnaires, interviews and discourse analysis, Hamilton looked for possible ideologies underlying the participants' speech towards English

and the countries in which it is spoken, suggesting that this set of ideologies and approaches to culture – which praised American and British culture for the most part – were affecting the teachers' and students' identities negatively. The results pointed to the need of teachers and students to take more critical and reflective stances in the English learning or teaching process.

Similarly, Pallú (2008) investigated the social representations of students, parents and teachers from public and private primary schools in Paraná on the importance of English for their lives, for society and in school. Looking into hundreds of questionnaires and using content analysis and critical discourse analysis, Pallú indicated that significant representations in the peripheral core of her findings showed a demand and desire for using English in emerging situations that permeate global relations and that need to be further addressed in the educational context. In a subsequent study, Pallú (2013) investigated the beliefs, assumptions and attitudes of a group of English teachers and student-teachers participating in a workshop offered by UNIOESTE, a university in Paraná, on the understanding of English as a Global Lingua Franca (EGLF). Her findings pointed out that the majority of participants were not familiar with some of its assumptions, and some of them suggested that society in general does not recognize English that way, what reinforced the claim for rethinking the teaching of English as an educational project.

Indeed, other studies focused on teachers' representations suggest that teachers in Brazil still see themselves in comparison to authoritative native speakers of English. Souza (2012), for instance, investigated the representations of teachers in different school settings in Santarém, Pará and indicated that English was seen by them as a symbol of status and prestige and that some of them portrayed a feeling of inferiority when comparing themselves to native English speakers. In the university context, Bêrredo (2015) conducted a study on some professors' and student-teachers' perceptions on the teaching of English and its status in the globalized world. Among its findings, the study carried out at UFSC showed that the participants opposed the native speaker model as a goal of pronunciation, but demonstrated a conservative stance toward the adoption of a native standard variety in English teaching. Although the focus of the present study is not on teaching, this sort of investigation is found to be relevant in the understanding that how English is taught may inform the way students are constructing their identities.

Regarding studies that focus particularly on English learners' identities, in the same context as the present research, Carazzai (2013)

investigated the most memorable experiences of English language students enrolled at UFSC in search for their investments in learning English, their significant imagined communities and the subject positions they assumed regarding English. Her findings, based on a number of data collection instruments, suggested that participants went through a process of identity (re)construction while learning English and that they invested in the language since their childhood hoping to acquire particular material and/or symbolic resources. According to Carazzai (2013), all students wished to relate to the world through the English language, but often felt marginalized and separated from other speakers and users of the language. In a different context, a study by Clemente and Higgins (2008) explored ethnographic narratives from students in Oaxaca, Mexico, to investigate how their performances in English provided them with the means to explore various identity locations and how they performed with a "postcolonial accent", meaning that they were able to learn, appropriate and redefine their use of English by bringing their own voice and identity to it.

Other studies focus on the matter of feelings related to language learning. In Swain & Miccoli (1994)'s study, for instance, the feelings of an adult Japanese English learner are captured as she reflects on her classroom experiences during a collaborative learning course. Findings showed that the participant expressed negative emotions, such as low self-esteem, but her conscious reflection about them and their sources allowed her to act upon these feelings. Wilson (2013), claiming that positive feelings are not frequently mentioned in the literature of language learning, in comparison with feelings of anxiety or disempowerment that are more often addressed, attempted to investigate the positive feelings of adult first-language English speakers learning a foreign language. His findings indicated that operating in a foreign language gave learners a sense of freedom, as it enabled them to speak and behave in ways that were different from their usual modes.

Finally, I would like to refer to Baum's (2014) study, which explored Israeli preservice English teachers' "feelings towards the English language and its perceived cultures and the symbolic place these cultures occupy in the students' view of themselves and their society" (p. 408). She argued that the students' professed love of the language had to do with their successful appropriation of various facets of the English *languaculture* - understood as the complex of linguistic and cultural elements that forms a language - for the enrichment of their self-identity, which remained fundamentally rooted in their local habitus. The results indicated that the students' prolonged intercultural exposure to English

resulted in “an interweaving of global and local elements, the intrinsic and the instrumental, an affirmation of social rootedness, and a lingering sense of ‘apartness’, which together formed the students’ complex, multifaceted self-identities” (p. 408). Baum concluded that English took for these learners “a symbolic value much higher than an objective assessment of its economic or instrumental worth would suggest”, in the words of Spolsky and Shohamy (1999, p. 56-57, as cited in Baum, 2014, p. 418). The nature of this symbolic value is of interest in the present research, bearing in mind its particular context of investigation.

CHAPTER III
METHOD

The present study followed a qualitative approach, meaning that it was concerned with subjective opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals and that it involved data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended data, which are then analyzed by non-statistical methods (Dörnyei, 2007). Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive and understands that human behavior relies upon meanings which people attribute to things, values and practices. Such approach is especially suitable in the context of this research due to its emergent nature: no aspect of the research design was tightly prefigured and the study could remain open and fluid, so that it could respond in a flexible way to new details emerging during the process of investigation (Dörnyei, 2007).

The focus of qualitative research is on the participants: how they experience and interact with a phenomenon in a particular context and the multiple meanings it has for them (Crocker, 2009). This type of research in the field of second language acquisition has been underpinned by the desire to understand social processes of learning, propelled by the "social turn" in SLA (Coffey & Street, 2008). Within this trend, the analysis of first-person accounts of the learning process has gained legitimacy, "giving voice to the learner's own view of factors both predisposing and sustaining different trajectories of language learning" (Coffey & Street, 2008, p. 452).

In this study, learners' voices are explored through the perspective of narrative inquiry – a qualitative approach that gathers first-person accounts of life experiences, mostly through interviews. This approach is suitable for the present research if we agree that addressing identity issues requires an inquiry into people's experiences and meaning making (Kanno, 2003) and if we understand identity as socially constructed ongoing narratives (Block, 2007). The next section gives further details about this approach.

3.1. METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND: NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Narrative Inquiry has emerged as a form of research when social scientists from a number of disciplines started arguing that people's lives are stories they tell themselves and other people and that one way to understand human experience would be to document and study these stories (Murray, 2009). According to Riessman (2008), the field of narrative studies has a long history, but it flowers in the 1980s with challenges to realism and positivism. As a cross-disciplinary field, it reflects postmodern concerns with self and identity, understanding that individuals, no longer viewed as given or 'natural', "must now construct who they are and how they want to be known" (Riessman, 2008, p. 7), what is often realized through storytelling.

There is a variety of approaches that come under the heading of "narrative inquiry" (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chick, 2014), and definition of narrative depends on the area. It can range from discrete units of discourse, such as an extended answer by a research participant to a single question, to an entire life story, constructed from parts of interviews, observations and documents (Riessman, 2008). Many kinds of texts can be viewed narratively, including spoken, written, and visual materials. However, as Riessman points out, not all talk and text is considered a narrative, for stories demand the consequential linking of events or ideas. Barkhuizen et al. (2014) describe the general features of narratives in the following terms: they are "spoken or written texts; produced by people who have something to tell; situated in time and space" and they "involve development over time; have structures that correspond to the developments they describe; encapsulate a point that the narrator wants to get across; have purpose and meaning within the context of their telling" (p. 7).

The main strength of narrative inquiry, according to Barkhuizen et al. (2014), is its focus on how people make sense of their experiences through stories, in areas of investigation where it is important to understand phenomena from the perspectives of those who experience them. Thus, in the field of applied linguistics, narrative inquiry "can help us to understand how language teachers and learners organize their experiences and identities and represent them to themselves and to others" (Barkhuizen et al., 2014, p. 5). Also, it may be through such narratives that they mark out the teaching and learning of a language as significant for the development of their identities, situated in specific social, historical, and cultural contexts.

In the field of applied linguistics, researchers have used different genres to explore narratives, including case studies, learner autobiographies, diary studies, biographies, and memoirs (Murray, 2009). In biographical case studies, for instance, researchers elicit data from individuals and write them up as narratives for further analysis. There can also be studies of multiple narratives, as it is the case of this research, which are similar to biographical case studies, with the main difference being the number of participants (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). Research topics within the area of language learning from a narrative perspective include: *learning approaches and strategies* (e.g. He, 2002; Oliveira, 2011); *motivation* (e.g. Lim, 2002); *investment* (e.g. Norton Pierce, 1995); *multilingualism* (e.g. Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004); *experiences of emigration* (e.g. Kanno, 2003); *affect* (e.g. Baum, 2014), *identity* (e.g. Norton, 2000), among several others. According to Barkhuizen et al. (2014), the emerging themes that are especially characteristic in the field are identity, context, and affect (meaning the emotional dimensions of language teaching and learning which are usually suppressed by other research approaches). Insights into learners' narratives can thus be instrumental in understanding a number of language issues and can provide valuable information for researchers, teachers and the society in general.

Interest in narrative has also been linked to "a turn towards the idea that research should both involve and empower the groups and individuals whose behaviors are the subject of research" (Barkhuizen et al., 2014, p. 3). In a sense, the attention to personal narratives in research respond to the 'disintegration of master narratives' from modern thinking, as people make sense of experience and claim identities by telling or writing their own stories (Riessman, 2008). Narrative inquiry thus expands the range of voices found in research reports.

The next sections will provide more details on the context of investigation, the participants, and the procedures taken for data generation and analysis in this study.

3.2. CONTEXT OF INVESTIGATION

This study was carried out in the context of the Undergraduate Program in English Language and Literature (*Letras – Inglês*) at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC), whose main campus is located in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil. Founded on 1960, UFSC offers free and public education at all levels and has reached position number 9 among Brazilian universities in the QS University Rankings: Latin America 2018.

In order to attend an undergraduate program at UFSC, the main form of access is passing a university entrance exam ("vestibular") that takes place every year and that can be very competitive, as there are not enough places for everyone. In the 2017 exam, for instance, the number of applicants per place available in the English Language and Literature Program was 12.93. It is important to notice that, to expand university access to socially vulnerable groups, UFSC, like many other Brazilian public universities, has an Affirmative Action policy that reserves a certain number of places in the entrance exam for black, indigenous, *quilombola* and low-income people who have studied in public schools.

The UFSC Undergraduate Program in English Language and Literature (*Letras - Inglês*) lasts four years and offers 40 places each year for students interested in getting a degree with focus on teaching (*licenciatura*) or on research (*bacharelado*). In the first two years, students take core courses, and in the fifth semester they have to choose the focus of their degree. In the first option (*licenciatura*), students take a teaching practicum in schools. When they graduate, they are able to teach in a variety of settings. In the second option (*bacharelado*), courses focus on research and prepare students for the writing of a final research paper. In this case, graduates generally follow a career on research, translation, or other language-related professions other than teaching.

It is important to notice that the program does not expect students to be proficient in the language from the very beginning. The curriculum includes courses focused on oral and written comprehension and production in English at beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. The students who enter the program and who already have some proficiency in the language can take a test to be dismissed from the first semester's English classes (and they can continue doing so in the subsequent semesters). This was the case of most of the participants in this study. Aside from the English language courses, students attend courses on literature, linguistics, applied linguistics and translation.

3.3. PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were 16 students from the first year of the English Language and Literature Undergraduate Program at UFSC. They were the ones who replied to the invitation to take part in the research that was sent by e-mail to all students entering the program in March 2017. First-year students were selected because of my interest to investigate the representations and experiences of newcomer students, taking into account their reasons for entering the program and also presuming that they did not have much prior contact with theoretical views about language yet.

A general profile of the 16 participants is provided in the table below.

Table 1
Participants' general profile

Name	**Age**	**Place of Birth**	**Level 1 English***
Alice	17	Chapecó/SC	No
Ana Rieger	21	Florianópolis/SC	No
Bernardo	53	Montenegro/RS	Yes
Bianca Inácio	21	Florianópolis/SC	No
Bruna	18	Florianópolis/SC	Yes
Chokolatchy Kentchy	35	Curitiba/PR	No
Daiana	26	Matão/SP	No
Débora	20	Vidal Ramos/SC	No
Drake	20	Palhoça/SC	No
Eduardo	33	Florianópolis/SC	No
Jade	18	Santarém/PA	No
João	18	Atibaia/SP	No
Josh	19	São José/SC	No
Luana	17	Chapecó/SC	No
Virgínia	17	Rio do Sul/SC	No
Yumi	17	Londrina/PR	No

*As explained above, students entering the program can take a test to be dismissed from the level 1 English classes if they already show from intermediate to advanced oral and written proficiency in the language. "Yes" means the participant is taking the beginner classes and "No" means they have been dismissed.

The names provided in the table above are pseudonyms chosen by the participants themselves. They will be used throughout this text in order to assure students' confidentiality and to keep their identifying information private. More detailed information about each of the participants is given in the data analysis and discussion chapter (chapter 4).

3.4. OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.4.1. Objectives

As stated before, the general objective of this research is to investigate the meanings and values attributed to English by a group of students entering the English Language and Literature undergraduate program at UFSC, Santa Catarina, Brazil, their cultural identification with the language and the ways in which they construct their identities as English speakers/users.

The specific objectives are:

- to explore students' representations of English, identifying the meanings and symbolic values it carries for them, which are closely related to their learning investments;
- to identify students' representations of English-related cultures, exploring their understandings of culture and analyzing whether and in what ways they see themselves taking part of them;
- to analyze the ways in which participants position themselves as English speakers/users in the world, taking into account their agency as language users.

3.4.2. Research Questions

The following research questions guide the investigation:

1) What are the meanings and values that English carry for the participants?

2) How are English-related cultures represented by participants and in what ways do they identify with them?

3) How do participants position themselves as English speakers/users in the world**?**

3.5. DATA GENERATION

Data in this study consisted of spoken narratives and accounts gathered from the participants during semi-structured interviews. This type of interview was chosen because it allowed the conversation to focus on specific topics while remaining open to the interviewee's experiences and to the exploration of unexpected angles (Baum, 2014). Thus, a set of questions was prepared beforehand but allowed for flexibility as interviews did not follow one specific order and could include follow-up questions when any clarification or elaboration was needed. Interviews were also characterized as concurrent in the sense that participants discussed both their past and current language experiences (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). The interview guide is provided in the table below.

Table 2
Semi-structured interview guide

INTRODUCTION
1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? (age, place of birth, previous education…)
INVESTMENT IN ENGLISH LEARNING
2. Can you tell me in details how you have learned English?
3. Why did you keep investing in it?
4. Why did you choose this undergraduate program?
5. Do you speak other languages? If so, how did you learn them?
6. Have you ever lived or traveled abroad? How was the experience?
7. How is the English language present in your everyday life?
8. What would you say was/is the role of Internet in your learning experience?
9. Do other people around you (outside the University) also speak English?
10. Did your parents learn English too? Did they go to the university?
REPRESENTATIONS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURES
11. What are the advantages of speaking English in your opinion?

12. Do you think there is anything that makes English different from other languages?
13. Have you ever experienced talking with a native speaker of English (NS)? How was it? What about non-native speakers (NNS)? In what ways speaking to NNS in English was different from speaking to NS?
14. What comes to your mind when we speak of the cultural aspects related to the English language?
15. Do you identify with any aspect of this/these culture(s)?
16. Have you ever noticed varieties in the English language, that is, different forms of speaking the language? Where have you seen or heard it?
17. Can you name some of the countries in which English is an official language?

IDENTITY AS AN ENGLISH LEARNER/SPEAKER

18. Do you consider yourself an English speaker?*
19. Do you have an ideal that you want to achieve as an English speaker? Do you aim at speaking "like a native"? How is that important to you?
20. Do you feel different when you are speaking English? In what way?
21. When you learn English, do you feel like you are learning other things too?
22. What do you think would be different in you or in your life if you didn't speak English?
23. Which career do you wish to pursue?
24. Can you describe some important turning points in your life?

CLOSURE

25. Do you have any other interesting story you would like to share about your experience with English?

*Although in the analysis I discuss the appropriateness of the term 'English speaker', in comparison with the more encompassing term 'English user', I was not considering this when I prepared the interview script.

According to Murray (2009), a limitation of narrative inquiry is the trustworthiness of the information the participants provide. Riessman (2008) reminds that investigators do not have access to the 'real thing', but rather to the speaker's imitation (mimesis) of things. Although data from narratives cannot be taken as complete and accurate representations of reality, as Kouritzin (2000, as cited in Murray, 2009, p. 59) points out, more important than the events themselves are the participants' understanding (and representation) of such events, and the impact they can have in their lives. It is also important to note that narratives are co-constructed and, in this sense, in a research interview, a personal account

should not be understood as the expression of a single subjectivity, but as a co-construction by both the participant and the interviewer (Riessman, 2008).

As for the procedures for data generation, as mentioned before, invitations to participate in the study were sent by email to the new students enrolled in the first year of the English Language and Literature Program. The purpose of the study and its procedures were carefully explained in the message, and all students received a consent form containing the details about the study. The consent form was designed in compliance with the Brazilian Resolution no. 510, of 7 April, 2016, and the conduction of the present research was approved by the Ethics Committee at UFSC in November 2016 (Report no. 1.811.233). Participants were interviewed only after signing the consent form (see the form in the Appendix A).

The interviews lasted from about 30 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the participant's responsiveness. They were carried out individually in a quiet room at UFSC, recorded in audio format, and later transcribed for analysis. Participants could choose whether they preferred to speak in Portuguese or in English during the interview, so that they could feel more comfortable during the conversation. As a result, 13 participants chose to speak in Portuguese and only 3 participants in English. Each student participated in only one interview section.

3.6. DATA ANALYSIS

To be analyzed, data had first to be carefully transcribed. For Riessman (2008), a transcription is a kind of interpretation, for the researcher does not "stand outside in a neutral objective position, merely presenting 'what was said'"; rather, when constructing a transcript, she or he is implicated along the way in constituting the narratives (p. 28). According to the author, there is not a single form of transcription suitable for all research situations, and the researcher's choice may underlie different perspectives about language and the 'self'. The perspective adopted here is of the 'self' produced dialogically, that is, in interaction. In this sense, based on Riessman (2008), the transcriptions provided for this study did not erase my voice as a researcher, rather, they included my initial questions and later ones asking for clarification, as well as my

back-channel expressions (e.g. mmm, uh huh), and the break-offs by both the participant and the researcher.

Narratives require close interpretation and the type of data analysis depends on the focus of investigation. Here I follow the thematic analysis proposed by Barkhuizen et al. (2014), focusing on content rather than on narrative structure or performance. In general terms, thematic analysis involves repeated reading of the data, coding and categorization of data extracts, and their reorganization under thematic heading. Barhzuiten et al. (2014) indicate that this type of analysis is best suited to multiple case studies, "because it opens up the possibility of comparing the narratives in a data set, of establishing shared themes, as well as highlighting individual differences" (p. 77). For the present study, five steps were followed based on Murray (2009):

1) the interview transcripts were coded, meaning that passages from the text expressing a particular idea or referring to a particular event were labeled taking into account the reviewed literature and the participants' experiences. Some of the labels used were: *English learning; understandings of language; representations of English; values carried by English; understandings of culture; representations of English-related cultures; cultural identifications; real, virtual and imagined communities; role of internet; identity as English speaker; English language varieties; agency; future*;

2) the participants' stories were constructed from the interview data, and a narrative summary for each of them were provided (available in the Appendix B);

3) stories were sent for the participants to make comments, and here they had the chance to confirm, refuse or ask for changes in the text, as they are invited to actively participate in the representation of their selves;

4) a "cross-story" analysis was carried out for comparison and contrast; and

5) themes were discussed as they emerged from the stories and the categories, in order to identify and characterize the learners' investments, their real and imagined communities, their representations towards the English language and related culture(s), and towards themselves.

3.7. PILOT STUDY

A pilot study was conducted in March 2017, with the aim of testing the effectiveness of the questions proposed and of gaining new insights from them. Three participants from the target group (i.e. students in the first year of the UFSC English Language and Literature Undergraduate Program) took part in the pilot, and having analyzed that the interviews went well, I have decided to include these participants' data in the final study too.

CHAPTER IV
DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the interview sessions carried out within this study, participants were asked to share those significant moments in their lives where English was present, from the time they started learning until the present day. This involved telling me – a stranger researcher – about their personal interests, their feelings, their past and current struggles, and their desires for the future. They were also asked to share their impressions about the English language in relation to the world and to the cultures they recognize as being connected to it. Following Riessman (2008) and Carazzai (2013), I believe that, by telling their stories and their perspectives, these participants were (re)constructing their identities by organizing in words who they were and wanted to be and how they wanted to be known or perceived.

Each individual story was organized in the form of a narrative summary and the collection of these summaries is provided in the Appendix B of this thesis. As the present chapter focuses on the thematic analysis of the narratives as a whole, using excerpts of the participants' voices to raise comparisons, contrasts and discussions, the reading of such narrative summaries in the appendices is strongly encouraged in order to have a more complete picture of each students' perspectives and a better understanding of their personal trajectories. I have also included, in the same Appendix, my own personal narrative (p. 159), as I have gone through a similar process of learning. Since this is a qualitative study, I find it important to share my own story for it may have influenced the way I conducted the research.

A brief profile of each participant, with focus on their learning history and their relation to English, is provided in the table below.

Table 3
Participants' learning profile

Participant	**Lang. chosen for the intvw.**	**Age**	**Place of birth**	**Educational Background**	**Age that started learning English**	**Why started learning?**	**Took English courses?**	**Experience abroad**	**Everyday contact with English (as cited)**	**Reason for entering the English program**
Alice	Portuguese	17	Chapecó/SC	Private school.	Late childhood	Was feeling left behind in school and afraid of failing the	Yes, for 4 years, at a private language school.	Traveled to Europe for a couple of weeks (including	Movies, music, fanfics, social media.	Identification with the English subject and

						English subject.		Portugal, France and England).		interest for reading.
Ana Rieger	Portuguese	21	Florianópolis/SC	Private school. Started a degree in Journalism.	Early childhood	Her grandmother decided that she had to learn a second language and English was the most accessible. Also invested in the language to access literature in the original language and to write (mostly fanfics) in English.	Yes, for about 8 years, at a private language school.	Traveled to the US for a week (Disneyland).	At work (teaching English to kids), reading and writing fanfics, interaction on social media, series, music.	Taste for reading and writing in English.
Bernardo	Portuguese	53	Montenegro/RS	Public school. Started a few degrees but did not complete any (Economy, Biology, Sociology, and Geography).	Adolescence/Adulthood	Is interested in British literature and wants to read works in the original language, besides his recent admiration for Ireland.	No, only at regular school.	Traveled to Ireland for a couple of days. Also visited Uruguay.	Books, Irish newspapers online, TV news, English classes at the university.	Taste for literature and recent affection to Ireland.
Bianca Inácio	English	21	Florianópolis/SC	Public/private school. Started a degree in Information Technology.	Late childhood	Enjoyed singing and wanted to know the meaning of the songs she liked.	Yes, for about 3 years, at a private language school.	Traveled to Europe for a month (including France, Germany and Austria)	Music, series, movies, studying and working (as a teacher), interaction with friends.	Enjoyment in studying English and connection with the things she likes, including teaching.
Bruna	Portuguese	18	Florianópolis/SC	Public and private school.	Adolescence	Wanted to write poems and personal texts in a different language so that people around her would not read them, and English was the most	No, only at regular school.	Never went abroad.	Music, series, writing (poems, songs, posts on the internet), English course at the university.	Taste for literature, having chosen English because she saw more opportunities in studying a different language instead of Portuguese.

						accessible one.				
Chokolatchy Kentchy	Portuguese	35	Curitiba/PR	Public school. Has a degree in Tourism.	Adolescence	Believed that learning English was an obligation to succeed in the job market, although he disliked the language.	Yes, for about 3 years, at a private language school and at a public school.	Lived in England for 7 years. Has traveled to several countries in Europe and also to Russia, Marrocos, and Paraguay.	Teaching and studying at the university, internet (social media, news).	Desire to improve his teaching skills and obtain a teaching license.
Daiana	Portuguese	26	Matão/SP	Public school. Has a degree in Logistics Technology (short-term program)	Adolescence	Curiosity about the language was triggered by her interest for the Harry Potter series.	Yes, for about 7 years, at a private language school.	Never went abroad.	Interaction on an internet forum, series, music (mostly Korean music with lyrics in English).	Interest for literature and identification with the language.
Débora	Portuguese	20	Vidal Ramos/SC	Public school. Has a degree in Communication (short-term program).	Early childhood	She admired her English teacher and English became her favorite school subject.	No, only at regular school.	Never went abroad.	Music, series, interaction with friends.	Affection to English and the realization that she wants to pursue a career in teaching.
Drake	Portuguese	20	Palhoça/SC	Public school. Has a technical degree.	Late childhood	Wanted to understand the videogames and the songs he liked.	No, only at regular school.	Never went abroad.	Internet, music, books.	Realization that English has always been part of his life and desire to keep contact with it in professional terms.
Eduardo	English	33	Florianópolis/SC	Private school. Started a degree in Information Systems and another in German. Also tried once to get into Law School.	Late childhood/ Adolescence	Learned English accidently, as a means to have access to information about cultural items he was interested in (e.g. movies and videogame).	No, only at regular school.	Lived in the US for a couple of months (doing a work & travel program). Has been to Uruguay and Argentina too.	Movies, series, music, internet, interaction with friends.	Studying English as a way to keep connected to the world he discovered during his exchange experience in the U.S.

Jade	Portuguese	18	Santarém/PA	Private school.	Early childhood	Had close contact with English as her parents and her sister were English teachers and her father owned an English language school.	Yes, for many years, at a private language school.	Never went abroad.	Speaking to herself or with friends and family, movies, music, series.	Influence from her family, besides interest for languages in general and English in particular, as it is the one she is most familiar with and which can open doors to other languages.
João	Portuguese	18	Atibaia/São Paulo	Private school.	Late childhood/ Adolescence	Wanted to go on a high school exchange in the US.	Yes, for 3 years and a half, at a private language school.	Never went abroad.	Books, series, music.	Taste for reading and writing and desire to become an international writer.
Josh	English	19	São José/SC	Public school.	Late childhood	Learned through music and mostly by playing videogames. Was forced to understand English spoken by American gamers in order to succeed in the game.	Yes, for about 3 years, at a private language school.	Never went abroad.	Broadcasts, online news, online interactions, book writing.	Working with English is pretty much the only thing he can think of as a profession.
Luana	Portuguese	17	Chapecó/SC	Public school. Technical degree in Layout Technician.	Early childhood	Her mother understood that learning English was important, so she and her brothers started an English course.	Yes, for about 5 years, at a private language school.	Never went abroad.	Books, music, series.	Taste and identification with the English subject.
Virgínia	Portuguese	17	Rio do Sul/SC	Private school.	Late childhood/ Adolescence	Wanted to understand the songs and the series she liked, besides a general interest in languages.	Yes, for 6 months, at a private language school.	Never went abroad.	Music, books, social media.	Interest for human sciences and languages, having opted for English because it is the one she likes the most.

Yumi	Portuguese	17	Londrina/PR	Private school.	Late childhood	Was curious for learning new things and new languages.	Yes, for about 10 years, at a private language school.	Went abroad four times: twice to the US, once to England, and another to Israel and Egypt.	Movies, music, series, books, internet, chatting with an international friend.	Taste for reading and desire to work around books.

In the sections that make up this chapter, I discuss (**i**) how English entered the lives of the participants, discussing the cultural and social triggers involved and the role of formal and informal learning in this process; (**ii**) the meanings of English represented by them, including understandings of language in general and a discussion on the symbolic values attributed to English in particular; (**iii**) their implicit views about culture and the representations of English-related culture(s), including their personal identification with that(those) represented culture(s); (**iv**) their positioning in the English-speaking world, concerning their participation in real and imagined communities; (**v**) their view of themselves as English speakers, discussing what constitutes a speaker, the native (legitimate) vs. non-native (illegitimate) speaker debate, and how they feel when using English; and, finally, (**vi**) how they exercise their agency in English, discussing what participants were performing and producing in that language and what are their desires for the future.

The sections will include excerpts from the sixteen transcribed interviews[5]. The following transcript conventions have been followed:

– = interruption of a sentence or word by the interview
[ ] = comments from the interviewer
(risos) or (laughs) = laughter from the interviewee
[risos] or [laughs] = laughter from the interviewer
italics – emphasis placed on that particular world
(…) = information from the original transcript that has been cut due to relevance or length purposes

[5] Due to length constraints, transcriptions are not provided in full in this thesis.

4.1. ENGLISH IN THE MAP AND IN THE HEART

The first part of this analysis is focused on the meanings and representations brought by participants regarding language, culture, and English in particular – both in global terms (*English in the map*) and in terms of their personal engagements with the language (*English in the heart*).

4.1.1. How English entered the participants' lives

To begin the analysis, I describe some relevant aspects of students' initial and ongoing contact with English in order to build up the context of learning of this particular group of students.

4.1.1.1. Cultural and social triggers

To a greater or lesser extent, English was already part of the participants' lives when they started learning it. It was not a language to which they had to seek access for a particular reason nor was it "alien" to any of them. It was somehow part of their cultures, for – although they were all born and raised in Brazil –, the country has felt the effects of globalization (and Americanization) processes. As expected, English was reported to be present in music, movies, series, books, videogames, school, at home and in the internet by the time students started investing in it.

In many of the interviews, English learning appears as an important and socially encouraged activity. Six participants have acknowledged the influence of close social agents who have encouraged them to learn, namely: Alice's mother, Ana Rieger's grandmother, Jade's parents, Luana's mother and aunt, Virginia's friend, and Débora's school teacher. Chokolatchy Kentchy has also acknowledged the importance of English in the competitive job market – a social pressure that has fostered him to learn even though he disliked the language at first. Others pointed out that they sought learning opportunities by themselves, motivated by a curiosity to understand songs, series, videogames, or to get in closer

contact with the things they liked, such as literature or movies. This curiosity was also based on the desire to get to experience another culture, like in João's case, who, at the age of 9, wanted to learn English to go on a school exchange in the U.S. (probably because this was the country whose culture usually appeared on TV).

Overall, participants narrated a positive experience and an affection for the language since the beginning. This differs from situations where learners are forced to learn in order to integrate to a particular community embedded in relations of power, as is the case of immigrant learners (see Norton, 1995). Exceptions are Bernardo and Chokolatchy Kentchy who, at first, felt some resistance and nurtured a critical view about English because of its imperialist background, but later on discovered that the language could carry different meanings. Alice also related learning English with the fear for failing school and Josh, although he enjoyed the language, felt the need to improve his speaking skills when he started interacting with American online gamers who made him feel somehow inferior. Nevertheless, experiences with English were mostly favorable and promising for these students.

While English is associated to – either tangible or yet intangible – social interactions, it also entered participants' lives in a way that marked their individuality: Bruna, for instance, was motivated to learn English because she wanted to start writing poems in a language other than Portuguese, so that people around her would not grasp her intimate thoughts. Virginia, like other participants, also preferred writing in English for she felt it became something more of her own, detached from the social pressure around her. So English was learned, at the same time, as a language to speak out to the world, and as one to keep personal secrets.

The narratives also indicate that participants' social and financial conditions had an impact in their learning trajectories. Those coming from higher income families received support from their relatives to engage in language courses. This was the case of six of the seven students who went to private schools. On the other hand, those coming from less advantaged backgrounds reported having sought learning opportunities mostly by themselves. Among those who went to public schools, four students did not take any language courses, while other four looked for courses on their own (generally payed by their own too). Only one of them had the support from her mother. In particular, Bernardo, who never took any language courses and who only now in his middle age has decided to learn the language, English was, in his youth, not interesting for him and even

less encouraged. Coming from a workers family and imagining a similar future for himself, he could not see a reason for learning English.

The observations above suggest that, while in the more advantaged contexts the contact with English was encouraged by the family or other social agents, in less-advantaged contexts the interest for learning English came mostly from the students, based on their own personal experiences with, for instance, videogames, music, or literature (although students' own interest evidently has an important role in both contexts). It is possible to notice that even when the local context is not favorable, in the past years, internet has allowed a closer contact with English and other languages, and this seems to have enhanced the learning opportunities of those who cannot afford for private language education, becoming less dependent on it. In this sense, access to English seems to be getting a bit more democratic; although we have to bear in mind that the present study involved a specific group of students that do not necessarily reflect the reality of the great majority of Brazilian young people, who are not English users and who are still outside the universities – often in social conditions that are incompatible with studying and leasure. As a matter of fact, a report from the British Council (2015) highlighted that there is still a considerable correlation between higher incomes and language learning in Brazil.

4.1.1.2. Formal vs. informal learning

While access to language and informal learning opportunities have expanded, formal English education, as taking place in regular public or private schools, was portrayed as either negative or insignificant for the majority of the participants. Despite being a mandatory subject in the national curriculum, a recurrent view in many of the narratives was that school did not teach English, corroborating a belief that has been extensively discussed in the field of English teaching and learning in Brazil, that which is not possible to learn English in regular schools – particular public schools: "a gente tinha aula de inglês, mas, assim, é que nem todos os colégios, a gente não tem aula de inglês pra aprender inglês" (Alice, narrative).

Like other participants, Eduardo told that he took very little from school "because school only teaches the… very, very basic stuff" (Eduardo, narrative). For Bernardo, who went to school in the 70s-80s,

already in that time, “era ruim o inglês, então a gente não- não aprendeu a gostar”. On the other hand, he remembers that some of his classmates that took private courses and could travel abroad ‘naturally’ liked the language. Alice also observed that, in Brazilian schools, English is often taught with a specific focus on the Vestibular (university entrance examination): “o que é errado, né, porque, tipo [sim], se a pessoa não consegue pagar um cursinho, ela vai ficar sem poder falar”. Bianca Inácio exposed her view about this issue based on her personal experiences:

> English classes at school, they are like… ridiculous. (…) I feel like… if in a class, only one person is speaking, because (laughs) something is seriously wrong. It’s like ‘ok, let’s learn what today? Verb to be’ and if you ask, like, anyone, they don’t know what is that [mhm]. So, if it’s something that we saw for, like, 7 years of our lives, and we still don’t know… it feels like ‘ok, something is seriously wrong’, you know? (Bianca Inácio, narrative)

Although, in some narratives, teachers were pointed out as an issue –Josh, Eduardo and Chokolatchy Kentchy, for example, suggested that some of their teachers were not very qualified for the position –, in Bianca’s point of view, it is not the teachers’ fault that the education is bad, regardless if in public or private schools: “they don’t have much time, or… money, or… the ability to… do what they think… it’s right in a class, they have to follow the rules of the institution”, she said.

In contrast, school experience appeared as positive for some participants. Especially in Débora’s case, school played a very important role, as she found in her first public school English teacher a big example and inspiration for her: “eu lembro, e ela lembra toda a vida, assim, que - eu dizia que eu ia ser professora de inglês por causa dela. (...) ela foi essencial na – é, porque ela me cativou” (Débora, narrative). This same school was also the setting where Débora had her first teaching experience. Ana Rieger and Jade also reported having good English classes in the private schools they went to and Bruna recognized the contribution of one of her public school teachers who used to combined language with musical rhythm, which worked really well for her.

Now, participation in private language courses was considered more relevant than the regular school for the majority of students. Eleven of them took language courses, for a period ranging from 6 months to 10 years, and several of them associated their learning to these courses,

corroborating Barcelos (2006)'s study which showed that public school and the private language course were dichotomous places in the narratives of a group of students, the latter being represented as the ideal place to learn. Alice, for instance, started an English course because she could not keep track of her school classes: "assim, eu não sei bem como eu aprendi, porque eu – eu não gostava muito do método (…), mas eu acabei aprendendo" (Alice, narrative). Similarly, João, who started an English course at the age of 11, reported that "eu não sabia, tipo, de nada, do inglês da escola, assim, sabe? (...) Aí eu comecei a aprender, e eu peguei muito rápido". Daiana, who searched for an English course when she was a teenager, expressed the level of comfort she felt at the language school in which she spent 7 years: "já era praticamente a segunda casa, eu acho que o povo de lá tava até enjoado, já (risos)". Daiana's teacher became a good friend of hers and was one of the people who encouraged her to pursue a university degree in English.

Experiences in language courses where not all positive, however. Once, Luana took a course that she hated because she felt the teachers and the method were not good, and this had a direct impact in her learning process: "depois disso eu fiquei um ano parada, por ódio daquele curso, assim (risos) [nossa], bem sinceramente". Chokolatchy Kentchy, after taking some extra language classes in his school for about 3 years – not because he liked it, but because he felt obliged to learn the language for the job market – went to a private course that he hated, also because of the teaching method: "era bem nesse estilo… (…) fala-repete [uhum], aí eu… não, não consigo aprender assim… era horrível, parecia um papagaio".

Despite these positive and negative experiences in formal learning settings, what stood out as most significant in the participants' trajectories were actually the out-of-class experiences taking place at home or in other informal settings. Informal learning can be understood as "learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure and is not organized or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support", and which may be unintentional from the learner's perspective (Official Journal of the European Union, 2012:5, as cited in Sockett, 2014, p. 9). In fact, when asked to talk about their learning process, many of them reported learning it naturally or unconsciously. The following narrative excerpts illustrate this.

Learning naturally (without effort):

> "A impressão que eu tenho também é que um dia eu acordei e sabia falar (...), como eu sempre gostei

> (...), **ele foi vindo naturalmente**." (Débora, narrative)
>
> "Foi aos poucos, na verdade, **foi bem – bem natural** assim pra mim." (Alice, narrative)
>
> "It just, **sort of…** [mhm] **came naturally** (laughs) (…) one minute, I- I… was silent, the next minute I was speaking, and it just… [mhm] came, you know?" (Eduardo, narrative)

Learning unconsciously (without being aware):

> "**It's hard for me to say**, but I- I- I feel like… I've had this conception in my mind that I've known English for like really long, for some reason" (Josh, narrative)
>
> "**Desde que eu me lembro, eu – o inglês tá sempre presente**" (Drake, narrative)

Those who did not take any language courses stressed their autonomy in the learning process: "eu sempre gostei de videogame [uhum] e música, então eu sempre convivi com o inglês, (...) daí eu sempre já tive interesse de pesquisar pra poder entender [uhum] (...), foi, tipo, aprendendo sozinho mesmo" (Drake, narrative). Eduardo, in his turn, explained that his curiosity to learn more about the things he liked made him learn the language accidently: "I mostly did it not to learn English specifically; I… searched the web mostly… (…) because it's easier to find stuff in English than in Portuguese [mhm]". Débora also highlighted that she never needed an English course. Her passion for music was one of the biggest influences as to how she learned the language. Even those who took language courses stressed their informal experiences in the process, like Virginia: "eu fui vendo, por série... por entrevista... comecei a ler, comecei a procurar por conta própria, algumas coisas, e nisso fui aprendendo", and Daiana: "a maior parte eu fiquei mais assim no curso, (...) no início, né, depois eu fui procurando por eu mesma, eu fui entrando... (…) em fóruns de anime, que eu gosto bastante".

The excerpts also emphasize how English was (and continuous to be) closely around the participants. Exposure to English-language media is, to a great extent, as Sockett (2014) indicates, true for non-native English speakers just as it is for natives. In fact, several of them recognized its presence as being sometimes inevitable, like when Josh

talks about the impact of music playing on MTV: "I listened to music (…) and… since… it was all English music playing, (…) the- the thing caught up in my mind [mhm]", or Luana, who commented that "tudo tem inglês, né? (...) são essas pequenas coisas que a gente nem percebe que tá aprendendo, na verdade, (...) – sei lá, tem algum anúncio ou coisa assim, que tá em inglês, que tu nem percebe que tá em inglês, só depois que tu olha 'olha só, tava em inglês e eu li', sabe?". In this sense, Bianca Inácio argued that English "is something that even when we *don't* wanna learn it, we end up knowing a little bit about it, because it's… literally right there", and Ana Rieger shared a similar view: "não tem escapatória, o inglês tá em todo lugar". As suggested earlier, the contact with English becomes even wider with the increased access to online resources.

When talking about internet experiences, Virgínia noticed that "ela foi o principal, assim, porque a maior parte do que eu aprendi hoje (...) foi por meio de internet [uhum], foi pesquisando na internet, lendo na internet, ouvindo música e... [uhum] tudo assim por lá, praticamente". Likewise, Jade stressed that internet provided her with contact to real-life language that is different from the one she met in formal learning settings: "se fosse numa aula de inglês, eles não iam trazer esse conteúdo pra mim (...), é uma outra visão, um outro contato que você tem de... uma forma diferente [sim] de entrar em contato com outras palavras, assim, (…) tá tudo lá" (Jade, narrative). As the internet allowed him to interact with people from abroad and to search for new information, Drake pointed out that it "me fez ver mais coisas do que [uhum] só aquilo, por exemplo, só um jogo, ou só... [sim, uhum] então eu acho que a internet (...) ... me abriu as - a visão, assim, sabe [sim], pra outras coisas" (Drake, narrative). Internet, thus, provides students with information, entertainment and interaction opportunities which they meaningfully connect to their English learning process. Bianca Inácio, particularly, argued that:

> "I feel like it was really, really important, because… as I said, my parents weren't the ones that were going to say 'no, let's learn English because it's important (…), that's something that I figured out by myself (…). Everything I learned - learned authentically, was on the internet. (…) Just like – for example, my brother, he speaks fluent English now, and only playing videogames [mhm] on the computer, so… it's like [mhm] - without it (laughs) I don't feel like we… we would be able to learn it" (Bianca Inácio, narrative)

In fact, as suggested earlier, these out-of-class and spontaneous learning experiences – not only on the internet – seem to have had a bigger impact as to how participants developed their language skills and how they relate to the English language. This contrasts with findings from previous studies which highlighted the belief of Brazilian English students and teachers that the ideal place to learn English – or any additional language – is the language school (see, for instance, Barcelos, 2006 and Silva, 2004). Also, as many of the participants are studying to become school teachers, the disparity between 'learnig informally' and 'not being able to learn at school' emerged in their narratives poses a future challenge to their careers. In this sense, an implication of what has been discussed so far is that formal education should engage with students' informal learning practices and/or attempt to enhance these opportunities, so as to recognize or foster students' relations to multiple target languages and cultural communities (Lam, 2008, p. 478), making classroom practices more meaningful.

Understanding that informal learning was of key importance for most of the students, it is also relevant to consider what English(es) and which cultural products were usually on their hands (or screens); whether they pertained to the dominant US/UK media or to other peripheral or intercultural English practices; and to what extent students were willing to interact with these plural cultures (and languages). In this sense, despite the long-standing predominance of American and British cultures in movies, series and music that spread in Brazil and in the world and that are widely reflected in the students' narratives, internet has also allowed the participants to find new worlds and to use English to chat with people from South Korea (Jade) or India (Drake); to participate in forums of Japanese culture (Daiana); to read fanfics by people from different parts of the world (Ana Rieger); among other intercultural practices. Also those who had the opportunity of living abroad for a while (Chokolatchy Kentchy, Bernardo and Yumi) evoked significant contact experiences with different cultures. The representations and other thoughts about culture will be discussed in more depth in the sections that follow.

Finally, what the narratives also indicate is the ease in which English entered the participants' lives (with the exception of Bernardo and Chokolatchy Kentchy, although their openness to the language changed through time) and the affection they felt for it. Students talked as if English was a very familiar aspect of their lives – although many did not consider themselves English speakers yet, a topic that will be analyzed later on in this chapter. Bianca Inácio argued that "we have a lot of… things to… go for (laughs) [mhm], so it's actually… easy, I think", when

talking about learning the language. With respect to students' expressed affection to English, the following excerpts illustrate how this affection connects to their identification to the language.

> "when I started… learning English, I started like – I **fell in love** with it. / I really **love** English (…)… I… **love** studying, I **love** a lot of things (…), now I am working, uh, teaching- teaching English, and… I **love** it [mhm], **like a lot**, it's… crazy [laughs] (Bianca Inácio, narrative).
>
> "Na verdade, eu não consigo lembrar de um tempo na minha vida em que eu não gostasse do inglês, (...) não sei, eu **gosto muito** do inglês, **muito, muito**. Eu não consigo separar a minha personalidade do- do idioma" (Débora, narrative).
>
> "Eu comecei a **gostar** da língua, **tipo, demais**, assim [uhum]. Hoje, eu... tipo, eu praticamente penso em inglês também [uhum], é muito legal isso" (João, narrative).
>
> "minha história com o inglês é uma história bem.... de **amor** e ódio, e bem... bem diferente, eu acredito (...). Quando eu cheguei na Inglaterra (...) eu tive um processo de... cair... eu me **apaixonei** pela língua lá" (Chokolatchy Kentchy, narrative).
>
> "Então agora – e agora tô **apaixonado** (risos), um mês e pouco de - de curso, já me **apaixonei**" (Bernardo, narrative).
>
> "a good… way to learn… it's to associate learning a foreign language with something you like [mhm]. I think that's… the most effective way, always associate with- **associate it with something you like** [mhm]" (Eduardo, narrative).

The next sections will help understand the implications of this affection as to how it impacts students' identity constructions as English language users.

4.1.2. What is English for them?

What is understood by language in the narratives? What does English represent to participants and what are their reasons for speaking English? These questions are addressed in the present section.

4.1.2.1. The participants' views about language

Before discussing the representations and meanings of English to the participants, it is important to draw on their views about language in general, as made implicit in their narratives.

The most noticeable view was that of *language as communication*. This was manifested when participants expressed their desire to travel and to be able to communicate – through English – with people who do not speak their first language. In addition to English, many expressed their willingness to learn other languages, in a way to expand communication, such as Eduardo: "when I go to different countries, I wanna speak their own language, (…) I- I like to at least try [mhm] (…) I don't wanna… have people have trouble understanding me". Likewise, Bianca Inácio spoke of the importance of being multilingual, in the sense of being able to communicate in different languages, but not necessarily mastering them. She narrated an episode from her personal experience abroad:

> "there were a lot of people selling things, like, for example, underneath the Eiffel Tower or something like that [mhm], and (laughs) the guy was speaking like… 6 different languages. **He didn't speak *well*, but he knew a little bit about everything** (laughs), and… that's the thing that I- I feel like it's really nice, you know, a- a person that – he needs to communicate [mhm] with tourists from… all over the world, so… he learns a little bit of everything [mhm] and he lives with that. Uhm… I think that's the amazing thing, you… you get to talk to people… completely different, from completely different cultures" (Bianca, narrative).

This leads to a second discussion of *language as attached to culture*. The majority of participants seem to agree that language and culture are interrelated. For instance, Yumi argued that, when learning English, "sempre tem alguma informação que a gente acaba pegando, é, da cultura, do modo como as pessoas se comunicam, de se expressar". Bianca Inácio and Débora shared a similar view: "I feel like the language is not just a language, it comes with a lot of… culture, and a lot of… background", said Bianca; "é quase um novo tipo de ver a vida, eu acho, assim (...), então eu acho que o inglês, ou qualquer outro idioma, né [sim], ele vem carregado", argued Débora. About this cultural load, Bernardo, who had only recently started investing in an additional language, already felt that "tem uma coisa... do jeito de eles olharem pro mundo que tá expresso naquela língua ali (...), aí eu começo a perceber... que na minha forma de usar... o português, também tem uma carga... que eu não percebia, né?".

In this sense, some participants highlighted the *intercultural aspect* of learning languages and rethinking one's own practices, such as Chokolatchy Kentchy: "não tem como você aprender só a língua (...), você vai tá exposto a... outras realidades, (...) culturas... sistemas políticos... você vai começar a repensar o seu próprio – a sua própria vivência, tendo essa exposição com outras realidades", and Bianca: "I feel like we can learn more about what we have in here when we try to study (laughs) something that is not, like, ours, you know?". These perceptions of language as closely related to culture – expressed as well in João's narrative when he stated that "eu quero falar igual um nativo [uhum], ter, tipo, toda a bagagem, tipo, cultural também, que se envolve" – places language as "the privileged medium in which me 'make sense' of things" and as the "key repository of cultural values and meanings" (Hall, 1997, p. 1).

There are also references of language seen as *political practice* (Pennycook, 2006). This is particularly apparent in Chokolatchy Kentchy's narrative when he speaks of the previous resistance he had on learning English: "Eu... não gostava, da língua inglesa. Eu achava que, uh... o inglês carregava... é... todo um arcabouço de dominação e de... possível, é... aniquilação de algumas línguas". Bernardo also spoke of the role of English in India, which, despite being the language of the colonizer, also served to unify Indian people to fight against the empire, for they spoke different native languages. In this sense, Bernardo evokes the nature of language as a locus of social organization and a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991).

Finally, the connection of language to *identity* is also made implicit in some of the narratives. For instance, when Débora affirms that "eu não consigo separar a minha personalidade do idioma", she is recognizing that language is the place where our subjectivity is constructed (Norton Pierce, 1995). Likewise, when Eduardo speaks of the personal expansion he feels when learning other languages, particularly English, – as in "it makes me feel like I'm more… free when I'm… speaking more than one language (…), looking back, I think it's much better now than back when I didn't know" – this personal enhancement connects to the idea of language as "an integral part of acting and being in the world" (Liddicoat & Sacarino, 2013, p. 15).

4.1.2.2. The participants' representations of English

Moving to the particular representations of English in the students' narratives, that is, the embodying of their ideas regarding English, the first that stands out is that English is a *universal language* that would be spoken anywhere. The following excerpts illustrate this representation:

> "o inglês, ele é internacionalmente conhecido, né, (...) então eu acho que é – acabou se tornando uma **língua... padrão** no mundo, pra mim, né [uhum] (...) tipo, tu vai pro Japão, tu não vai buscar um, um... guia turístico português. (...) Tu vai buscar um inglês, porque é o que tem" (Bruna, narrative).

> "praticamente, qualquer lugar que tu vá, mesmo que tu não saiba a língua daquele país, se tu falar inglês, já é meio caminho andado (risos), porque a maioria das pessoas sabe inglês, é uma **língua totalmente universal**" (Luana, narrative).

> "eu ainda acho que o inglês é mais pra, tipo, você se comunicar, assim, em lugares que você não conhece, sabe [uhum], do que tudo (...). É que é **básico, né**. Apesar de você – em qualquer lugar que tu vá, alguém *vai* falar em inglês, entendeu?" (Alice, narrative).

> "I feel like **English connects everything**, for some reason. (…) everybody tries to speak English eventually, because it's – it's what makes you… be able to speak with everyone, everywhere" (Bianca Inácio, narrative).

> "eu acho que só o fato de ser **mais universal do que a maioria**. Você vai sempre – você vai encontrar com muito mais facilidade alguém que fala inglês em algum lugar do que, por exemplo, francês ou o próprio português" (Yumi, narrative).

These views shared by participants are often generalizing and assume that people accept English and have easy access to English anywhere. The last three participants - Alice, Bianca Inácio and Yumi – made their considerations based on personal experiences visiting non-English speaking countries in Europe or in the Middle East. "I went to Europe speaking English, and… it wasn't their language either (laughs), and… why- why were we using English, you know?", questioned Bianca. In fact, she linked the answer to the impact of the United States in the world: "that kind of thing that everybody thinks that… the United States rule the world… [mhm] which is probably true and… probably… shouldn't (laughs) [laughs] be, but… [but that's-] what can we do?" Anyway, as the above excerpts are placing emphasis on English to communicate with people from countries of the expanding circle (Kachru, 2005), like Japan, they signal a perspective of detachment of the English language from the center, or inner circle. Although when it comes to English-related culture, the majority of them represent it as belonging to the inner circle, as this will be examined in the next section.

Still, English is depicted as having the status of the *most important language*, reinforcing that it is undeniably in a different position from other languages (Jordão, 2014), including in the school setting:

> "o inglês, eu acho que é a **principal língua**, acho que hoje em dia, né" (Drake, narrative).

> "the **first thing we try to speak**, besides our native language, is always English" (Bianca, narrative).

> "tipo, se - pelo menos na escola, a língua... a segunda língua é inglês, **depois, se tu quiser, tu aprende outra**" (Bruna, narrative).

> "it's a more, uh, widespread culture, I think [mhm]. It's what make - what makes English, uh, (…) I don't know, more important, or more interesting. (…) if you're gonna learn… a foreign language, it would be nice to… **think about English first** [mhm]" (Eduardo, narrative).

> "it's just… really basic, which works as a – as a global language for everybody, it's the basic (….) **no other language** could… change – **could take its place**. There's none. There's absolutely none" (Josh, narrative).

This view is reinforced by the great exposure they had to English in their everyday lives. Bruna told that English was the first contact she had with other languages, due to her contact with music or movies, making her realize, as a kid, that: "nossa, não é português que existe, só, existe outras línguas". Ana Rieger also sees the difference of English in relation to other languages in terms of this exposure: "outras línguas, sei lá, dependendo da situação, dá pra tu passar a tua vida inteira sem ouvir alguém falando, inglês não [uhum] (...) então não tem escapatória". Participants seem to recognize that languages are not socially equal (Bourdieu, 1977), and, in this sense, the representations they hold sustain the idea that "people do choose English because it is the dominant language, no matter how freely they make this choice" (Saraceni, 2015, p. 156, as cited in Souza, 2016).

Indeed, some of the participants demonstrated to have a critical stance regarding English as a *language of domination*. Bernardo, who during his youth rejected the language because of its link to imperialism and domination, remarked that "até hoje, a gente vê assim (...) quando a gente fala um pouco sobre... sobre o ensino de inglês – por que que só o inglês no Ensino Médio? Por que nem o espanhol consegue entrar? Então tem um pouco desse negócio que o inglês (...) é a língua do poder, do mundo". Chokolatchy Kentchy, as mentioned earlier, also felt a great resistance to learn English as a teenager because it carried domination with it. At the time, he preferred to learn Italian, a language that was in his family origins. Today, Chokolatchy believes that English has a different role, because, although its power is undeniable, it can ease communication among people while not necessarily annihilating other languages. Moreover, they recognized possible uses of English as *resistance* or *counterpower*. Bernardo, for instance, saw rock 'n roll as a contesting force, because they were using the language to fight against

the established power. He also spoke of the political context in China, suggesting that Chinese people are currently learning English for the nation's own interest: "se eles tão – alguém lá tá estudando inglês, eles já fizeram todos os cálculos de pra quê estudar inglês, né... [hum] e o que que eles querem com o inglês né, e não o inglês... quer com eles".

According to a survey by the British Council in 2015, perceptions of English language use are changing in Brazil, as "younger generations are more open to English and link it less to a political agenda and more with personal growth and opportunity" (British Council, 2015, p. 57). So, while the two participants who narrated their initial resistance towards English were respectively 35 and 53 years old, the majority of the participants were in their late teens or early twenties by the time of the interview and showed a distinct perspective. Ana Rieger's narrative is illustrative of this change, as she speaks of the negative and the positive impact of English in Brazil:

> "eu acho que é positivo {a influência americana} porque (...) é uma oportunidade de aprender, que se a gente não tivesse essa – tanto contato, em todo lugar, seria uma coisa que... pouquíssimas pessoas iam ter a oportunidade de ter contato, mas ao mesmo tempo é chato, porque (...) às vezes a gente percebe que não tá valorizando tanto o português, (...) sendo que na verdade... que não, né, o português é a nossa língua, tinha que ter mais um... um balanço de não achar que eles – que a língua deles é tão melhor que a nossa, ou melhor que as outras em geral (…). Mas eu não consigo, só por causa disso, ver como uma coisa ruim, sabe? Eu acho que... que é muito importante, e é muito mais positiva do que negativa" (Ana Rieger, narrative).

Thus, other common positive representations found in the narratives was that of English as a *necessary language* and as the *language of opportunities*, both at the professional and personal levels. In the following excerpts, for instance, participants refer to English as a need, or a 'commodity' (Jordão, 2004), in order to be part of society:

> "eu comecei a estudar inglês... não gostando, mas porque era uma **obrigação**, né? [uhum] (...) o mercado de trabalho exige" (Chokolatchy Kentchy, narrative).

> "eu acho que é **quase que essencial** pra uma pessoa, assim, que – se quer viajar, ou se quer... não sei, tipo, qualquer área (...) assim, facilita muito" (Luana, narrative).

> "eu acho que hoje em dia (...) você falar inglês já não é mais nem um diferencial (...), ele é **realmente uma necessidade**, pra você conseguir, é, conseguir se inserir tanto no mercado de trabalho quanto no - na sociedade, mesmo" (Débora, narrative).

> "ah, por causa do mundo, né, tá, tipo, virando esse mundo globalizado, assim, **você tem que... mover, se mover junto com ele**, né [uhum], se não você fica pra trás" (João, narrative).

It is important to notice that these representations of English as a fundamental skill to be part of society and as an object of desire are nurtured by the speech of other people around them or of society in general. "Todo mundo vem '*ah, não, mas você tem que saber falar inglês* [uhum], *tu tem que, porque é importante*'", Virgínia observed. So participants assimilate this for themselves and some of them carry the desire (and often failure) of others in the family who could not learn English, like Ana Rieger's grandmother: "é que ela nunca teve oportunidade de aprender [uhum] (...) então eu acho que ela sempre quis que eu tivesse essa oportunidade". The view of English as a language of opportunities is summarized in Bruna's speech: "eu acho que te abre muitas portas". Helping open such doors is the role Débora sees in her as an English teacher: "eu quero fazer com que – com que o inglês seja mais presente, assim, (…) abrir alguns olhos, (...) essa coisa de apresentar novos caminhos, mostrar que não é preciso eles fazerem sempre a mesma coisa".

At the same time that English was depicted as a language of opportunities, an underlying representation was that of English as a *language of exclusion* João's narrative, above, suggests that one who does not learn English "fica pra trás". Chokolatchy Kentchy also pointed out a cultural practice in some countries, including Brazil, of adopting terms in English to make products more sophisticated and give them a higher value. This practice would exclude people who do not understand English and who are not able afford these products: "grande parte da população que teve contato, é uma coisa óbvia, porque, né, chocolate meio amargo

em inglês é *dark*, mas e pras pessoas que nunca es- não sabem isso, sabe? (...) ainda tem pessoas que não têm a- acesso, eu acho isso ruim". For him, English becomes positive only for those who learn and are able to master it, that is, only for a minority in Brazil who own this 'commodity'.

Finally, another representation was that of English as a *language that gives access to other cultures and discourses*. Some of the participants, like Daiana, Jade, Josh and Yumi, showed a great interest for cultures from the East (particularly South Korean and Japanese), and English was depicted by them as a means to access these cultures and languages. For example, when they watch online videos with English subtitles – because they would generally not find translations or information directly in Portuguese – or when they listen to music that use both Korean and English, as Daiana explains:

> "felizmente, o coreano, ele tem uma cultura, assim, de que – que engloba um pouco na parte da música, que eles falam k-pop [uhum], que envolve um pouquinho outras palavras, expressões em inglês (...) porque é a língua mais falada, né, (...) aí quando fala alguma coisa em inglês, 'ah, essa parte eu entendi!' (risos)" (Daiana, narrative).

As Lam (2008) points out, "facilitated by electronic media, the English language is becoming increasingly tied to the cultural expression of various groups of native and nonnative speakers around the world" (p. 478). So rather than signifying Englishness or Americanness, it can also be used to represent Japanese or South Korean popular culture, for example. Again due to the advance of informational technology and to its global reach, English can be a language of access to other discourses about the world (Moita Lopes, 2008). Ana Rieger, for instance, reported that she got to know and understand some social issues better, such as feminism, through English, as these discussion are generally widely produced in English: "essas coisas assim que f- que eu comecei a ser, tipo, introduzida a isso mais pelo inglês [uhum], tipo, por pessoas que falavam inglês, na língua inglesa, do que aqui, sabe?", making it possible for her to make better sense of things around her.

4.1.2.3. Values attributed to speaking English

Pennycook (2006) argues that, more than a linguistic system, English is a product of the will to certain goods and identities. In this sense, this subsection will cover the material and symbolic values ascribed to English by the participants, linking them to their multiple investments in the language.

As a language of opportunities, many participants associated English with *finding better job opportunities* and *succeeding in life*. "Eu acho que a ideia que vem primeiro na cabeça de todo mundo é... o inglês tá em todo lugar, então você falar inglês é um bônus [uhum] no mercado de trabalho", said Jade. Looking at his past, Bernardo regretted not having learned English in his youth because of the work opportunities he may have missed. In a different context, during his years living in London, Chokolatchy Kentchy noticed he was able to find better jobs and climb up the social ladder as his English skills were progressing. In this sense, English is also related to power and social recognition. In fact, Clemente and Higgins (2008) observe that how well people can perform English provides them with the means to accumulate different forms of capital which they hope can be converted in economic capital. Although this is implied in getting better jobs, participants did not speak explicitly about remuneration. In fact, some of them reported they were discouraged by their families to pursue a career in English, especially in teaching, because it is not financially rewarding in Brazil. Josh, for example, desires to become an English teacher not for material gains but because he finds it a honorable profession and because he wishes to contribute to other people's success: "I wanna be… the center of attention that helps people succeed in life" (Josh, narrative). So, for him, as for other participants, it has more to do with realization than to financial capital.

English also brings to many of the participants *a promise of traveling and global citizenship*. Bianca Inácio expressed the feeling she had after traveling to Europe for a couple of weeks: "It was like… 'I wanna meet the world, I wanna know everyone', you know?" So English facilitates the communication with the world and the development of a cosmopolitan, explorer self. Coffey and Street (2008) discuss cosmopolitanism as an alternative to being entrenched in a fixed social category, allowing people to explore diverse identities other than L1 identities. In this sense, Bianca's desire to connect with the world may be influencing her mood when she speaks English, as she incorporates a sort

of different identity: “I’m usually *happier* speaking in English. I have like this smile all the time, and I’m always excited”. Aside from Bianca, all the participants have expressed a desire to travel abroad, to many different places. “Poder visitar países diferentes, conhecer coisas diferentes” is what English promises to Bernardo. Some of them wish to study abroad for a short or a longer period, like João, Luana, Jade or Yumi. Others to live and work abroad, like Eduardo, Bernardo and Jade. Débora, particularly, attempts to make students in her small hometown aware of the outer world, which is so vast and to which English can be a key.

As Norton Pierce (1995) suggests, learners expect to have a good return on their investment because it will give them access to otherwise unattainable resources. In addition to work and travel, English also allows *access to knowledge and entertainment produced around the world*: “ah, poder consumir mídia... assim, mais livremente, né, porque tu não tem um... [uhum] a barreira da linguagem, tu sabe” (Ana Rieger, narrative). So participants see in English *a way to get information in first hand*, mostly in the internet, and to read or watch things they like without depending on a future translation. Looking at his past, Bernardo reflects that he could have learned much more about the political issues taking place around the world in his youth if he could read foreign newspapers in English. Today, he likes to keep himself updated with the news from Ireland in the internet. So English, in a way, is an advantage for the participants as it allows them to *feel more connected to the world than those who cannot speak it*. In this sense, Daiana stresses the role of learning English to not feel excluded: “querendo ou não é muito triste, duas pessoas começam a conversar e você não entende o que elas tão falando, então eu acredito que o inglês ajuda nisso também” (Daiana, narrative).

Many of the participants also related English to *singularity* and *social recognition*. When talking about why she felt more comfortable writing in English than in Portuguese, Virgínia told that this may have to do with assuming a different personality that makes it easier to express oneself in another language, but also to the fact that “a maioria, como não entendia, era algo mais próprio, assim, mais individual [uhum], não tinha mais tanta gente em cima”. In this sense, Kramsch (2009) observes that many adolescents find in another language a new mode of expression that can challenge the monopoly of the language spoken in the local environment and offer them a distinction that other people do not have (Kramsch, 2009). As for social recognition, many of them reported situations in which they were asked to help other people with English, for example: classmates in class, relatives or friends who need to understand

or translate something, exchange students, tourists in the street in need for information, etc. When asked if she liked when friends and relatives searched for her help, Virgínia said: "eu acho legal, assim, porque, por exemplo, elas - elas têm mais confiança em vir perguntar pra mim do que pesquisar (risos) (...), acho legal [uhum], me sinto útil assim (risos)". Likewise, Bianca Inácio feels good when helping foreign people out. In a way, she realizes that not many people can offer this in Brazil: "one of the guys, he was like 'I already asked this to like 10 different people' (laughs) and I was like "oh my god, poor you' (laughs) [laughs]". More than recognizing her privilege, Bianca understands she can use her own knowledge to help other people achieve that, through teaching:

> "I always had… that feeling, you know, that I wanted to… be more than what I was [mhm], and… it's… complicated, because… in Brazil, I think, like, 5% of… the population speak English or something like that, and… it kind of makes us feel, like, special, like '**oh, we know something different, we know more, we can give more'** [mhm], and… I don't know, I- I guess I felt like I could do something with that, and… and I really started seeing that I was good and I could… help other people" (Bianca Inácio, narrative).

Another value English carries for participants is that of *freedom* and *new life experiences*. In her narrative, Ana Rieger told about her dream trip to Canada and her expectations to experience new things, because otherwise "tenho a impressão de que não tem muito… tô sempre presa ao que eu tenho aqui, sabe?". Likewise, for Bernardo, learning English means to "começar uma vida nova", related to his process of discovering new things. When speaking about his experience in the U.S., Eduardo told that: "before that, I had… uh, very… loose understanding of this…world [mhm], but… then I went there, I had this… amazing, amazing experience". In this sense, he believes that studying English is a way to keep in contact with that world, one that he closely relates to the idea of freedom, which is connected to both financial independence and to freedom of identity. When Débora thinks of her role as a teacher, she expects to show students that there is life beyond their hometown, because "às vezes parece que eles não veem muito além daquilo". As English was mind opening for her (and she did not have to leave the country to achieve that), she expects it to be for her students as well.

Just like Wilson (2013)'s findings indicate, the sense of freedom that a foreign language, in this case English, gives to the participants also relates to the possibility of speaking and behaving in ways that are different than their usual modes; and which are often more positive, resulting in *personal improvement*. For example, Eduardo reported feeling more outgoing and daring when speaking in English, especially during the time he lived in the U.S.. Débora also feels more courageous in English, as if she was less shy, especially when it comes to expressing her personal feelings. Bianca Inácio usually feels happier speaking in English, as if she was a character of something, whereas Portuguese feels more like "home" for her and more closely related to her life problems. For Josh, English is a simpler language and therefore his thoughts are better organized in that language, what makes him feel different and less limited.

Connected to these personal improvements, participants added the recognition that learning foreign languages allows the *rethinking of values and practices* and a *better understanding of oneself*. "Isso é uma contribuição que eu acho que o estudo de... de outras línguas acaba dando (...), comparar uma língua diferente com a minha [uhum], e ver até que ponto a linguagem tá... condicionando o meu comportamento, né?", observed Bernardo. "Eu acho que sempre você aprender outra língua é um... uma coisa... ótima, assim [uhum]. Porque abrange muito a sua... a sua mente, no geral", argued Jade. "We understand more of ourselves, I guess, and… the place we live", added Bianca Inácio. This illustrates Wenger (1998)'s statement that "learning is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming" (p. 215). So when Bernardo tells that he identifies himself with the Irish culture and that he sees a connection to his own *gaucho* identity, affirming that he is willing to investigate this further and that "eu acho que o inglês vai me ajudar", he suggests that he is investing in his own self when investing in learning the language. Thus, agreeing with Norton (2000), the participants have showed that their investments in English is connected with the acquisition of a wide range of resources, which are likely to enhance their cultural capital, their identity and their desires for the future. What these results also indicate, similar to Baum (2014)'s findings, is that English takes for the participants a symbolic value much higher than its economic or instrumental worth. So when Luana, for example, says that "eu sempre percebi que era importante, mas... eu – é mais por gosto (...) é mais por... [uhum] por realmente gostar da língua", the affection she expresses might be indirectly connected to all that English can bring to her – and to the other participants - in terms of the aforementioned values.

4.1.3. What shared meanings does English communicate?

Many participants argued that when they are learning a language, they are also learning about a culture. In this sense, this section aims to discuss the possible meanings that are shared by the represented cultures, according to the students' narratives, and what are their possible identifications with them.

4.1.3.1. Understandings of culture

First, it is relevant to discuss in what ways culture is understood by the participants. By associating language to culture, several students seemed to understand culture as *ways of thinking* and *viewing the world* which are imprinted in a language and that, in the case of a non-mother tongue, are different from theirs:

> "não é por acaso que a frase deles tem tal estrutura, ou porque... as palavras deles são assim, não deve ser por acaso, entende? Eu sinto que tem uma coisa... do **jeito de eles olharem pro mundo** que tá expresso naquela língua ali" (Bernardo, narrative)

> "at the same time that I'm… studying English, I'm studying about… different kind of people, **different ways to think**, because I- I do believe (…) that when we speak a language, we think in a different way" (Bianca Inácio, narrative)

> "é quase um **novo tipo de ver a vida**, eu acho, assim, porque tu tás... numa coisa que é fora da tua realidade" (Débora, narrative)

Culture was also depicted by some participants as *ways of behaving* or *societal norms*, often linked to national cultures, as when Josh told he would probably feel a cultural shock if he had to speak to a Japanese person: "I wouldn't know how to… behave (…), because of the different type of respect that you have to give that person (…), not that they're better (…) but because their – their idea of… politeness is different" (Josh, narrative). A problem with focusing on this aspect of

culture is that it tends to be seen as relatively static and homogeneous (Liddicoat & Sacarino, 2013). In fact, some participants recognized that what they often relate to a particular culture is a stereotype that may not always conform to reality:

> "quando se fala em Brasil, as pessoas pensam em gente extrovertida, não-sei-o-quê [uhum], que gosta de festa [aham], estereótipo [sim], mas quando – eu, eu não me encaixo muito nesse tipo de estereótipo, sabe [aham], e quando alguma pessoa fala algo em inglês, é uma pessoa mais reservada, mais – sabe? [uhum] Então eu acho que, não sei, nesse estereótipo, assim, eu acho que eu me encaixaria mais numa coisa... [uhum] inglesa, assim (risos) [entendi], sabe?" (João, narrative)

Another point of view sees culture as *dynamic practices*, in the sense that "meanings are not simply shared, coherent constructions about experience but rather can be fragmented, contradictory, and contested within the practices of a social group" (Liddicoat & Sacarino, 2003, p. 21). So, for instance, when Bernardo speaks of the awareness he is getting on gender and language, he recognizes that some cultural and linguistic practices can be changed, and that the contact with other cultures and particular languages which are more gender-neutral is helpful in that sense:

> "a professora de tradução, ela usa o x-zinho, né [ah, aham] (...) a colega que recebeu uma mensagem dela com um x-zinho mostrou "olha aqui ó, ela já tá usando" e eu não conhecia isso (...), nós vamos ter que inventar uma terceira maneira [uhum], de dizer pra – pra nos referirmos a um grupo que... que é misto, né? [e a língua pode ser modificada nesse sentido, né?] Eu acho que deve, e eu acho que vai acabar acontecendo. Inclusive o tal do x-zinho, ou o que for no lugar, acho que um dia vai ter que ser incorporado (...) Talvez, se a gente usar... o exemplo dessas línguas que não diferenciam, lá, o gênero, talvez a gente possa, sei lá, incorporar isso, né (...), acho que seria um avanço" (Bernardo, narrative).

Bernardo's reflection is in dialog with Hall (1997)'s statement that language is the "key repository of cultural values and meaning" (p. 1),

and that cultures in this sense can be transformed by the way people create different meanings and perform with language.

4.1.3.2. Representations of English-related culture(s)

In the interviews, participants were asked to reveal the cultural images that came to their minds when they thought about English. Ideas and symbols such as *nations, history, government, holidays, food, movies, sports, and personal characteristics* were brought up by them, often associated to specific locations, particularly the US and the UK. Hence, although researchers advocate that English should no longer be viewed as attached to a specific culture or nation (Ryan, 2012), the results of this study have demonstrated that this view often predominates and is frequently linked to stereotypical and essentialist representations.

In fact, most participants indicated that English is viewed *as closely connected to Kachru's inner-circle countries*: "Acho que a imagem principal que vem é Inglaterra, é Estados Unidos, é toda essa ideia de como é por lá", argued Yumi. This happens, as expected, not by accident, but because students have frequent access to products from these countries and also because formal learning experiences are usually targeted at the hegemonic cultures of English:

> "{o curso} era **mais focado nos Estados Unidos**, (...) eles tentavam dar uma balanceada, assim, mas – Oceania não existe, né. É tipo... ignorando total. Estados Unidos e Canadá [só o norte, uhum], é. E daí Europa. E... mais ou menos, mas era mais focado nos Estados Unidos" (Ana Rieger, narrative).

> "o curso que eu fiz era **mais voltado pra cultura americana** [uhum], que, tipo, eles faziam alguns eventos, (...) uma tarde com jogos, onde daí a - de lanche, tinha, tipo, *apple pie*... [uhum] uh, *waffles*, *pancakes*, coisas bem americanas, assim" (Luana, narrative).

> "na escola tinha o... na comemoração do St. Patrick's [aham], então a gente tinha o waffles, e (...) a **cultura irlandesa** [uhum], (...) então era o

> waffles com recheio verde (...), eu brincava, assim, com a minha... professora, '*waffle day!*' (risos)" (Daiana, narrative)

In this sense, Bianca Inácio agreed that the images one makes of a language "depends on… how you learn it". She added that "when I started learning English, and speaking English… I feel like… we kind of connect (laughs) in… to a place, or to… something (…)", thus evidencing a common necessity of connecting language to some kind of origin or concrete place.

Recognized as a major influence in many of the narratives, *the United States* was often the first association students made with the language: "eu associo mais aos Estados Unidos [uhum], depois é que eu fui saber 'nossa, outras pessoas têm como língua também' {o inglês}", told Bruna. She relates the country to the *things* she got to know through movies, such as the White House, and *to national holidays* like Independence Day and Thanksgiving. In this sense, Bruna makes a pertinent observation, recognizing that what she knows about this culture may not be real, but a fiction:

> "a gente não tem como saber realmente, assim, uma cultura, porque, pelo menos eu identifico... os aspectos dos... norte-americanos por filme, e filme é uma ficção [uhum, sim]. Não tem como confiar num filme, mas... se perguntar da Casa Branca, eu vou saber citar algumas coisas" (Bruna, narrative).

Other cultural images brought by the participants connected to the US were *food*: "em inglês, eu penso em fast food... [uhum] McDonald's, *hamburguers, pancakes*" (Luana), *pop culture*: "I feel like… there's this connection to pop music [mhm], when people speak English, well, American English" (Josh), *sports*: "o futebol norte-americano, que eu recentemente adquiri o hábito de assistir" (Daiana), and *politics:* "agora a imagem tá meio difícil com o Trump, né, mas tudo certo (risos), vem o Tio Sam na cabeça, assim" (Débora). Personal characteristics associated to American people in particular were not emphasized in the representations. Josh, who was in a relationship with an American girl for a couple of months, remarked that: "it's really not that distant, if you really think about, and if you make a comparison, it's – people just as crazy when they're young, (…) just like here" (Josh, narrative).

The connection to the *United Kingdom*, especially *England*, also appeared quite strongly in many of the narratives. "Ah, quando eu ouço inglês, eu acho que a primeira coisa que eu penso é a Inglaterra, (...) tem

– existem várias culturas, então... eu acho que a primeira é a Inglaterra", said João. Differently from the United States, the representations of the UK were more on the level of *history, tradition, and fantasy*. The *fanciful aspect of British culture* is shown in the following narrative excerpts, that highlight the influence from literature or movies:

> "you know, the cultural aspects, you think about British English as… (...) kind of like a **more… novel thing** [mm], you think of something more rich" (Josh, narrative).

> "me vem as- as séries que eu gosto, que é Doctor Who [uhum], e todo esse universo, é... de- de fantasia... pra mim, na verdade, o Reino Unido é **muito fantasioso** (...), muito relacionado com- com as séries, com os filmes que eu assistia" (Débora, narrative).

> "Inglaterra lembra a **rainha,** o **rei**... não sei se é por causa da história do Rei Artur (...). A Irlanda, (...) eu acho interessante aquela cultura mística que eles têm, que envolve mais a parte da magia e tal (...), acho que um pouco do Harry Potter me trouxe, né, essas coisas de magia " (Daiana, narrative)

In terms of *history*, Bernardo emphasized the history of Irish people in particular, to whom he has a special admiration: "essa - essa alma rebelde que eles têm, que tu vê assim, na – no jeito deles, (...) tudo tem a ver com a história deles de... tentar construir um país diferente". He recognizes, however, that this history might be an idealization, because "tu começa a colocar, assim, num pedestal - um passado, assim, que parece que foi (...), um passado quase mitológico", what Hall (2006) calls the "foundational myth" of a national culture: a story which locates the origin of the nation and its people so early that they are lost in not real, but mythic time (p. 54). Other *traditional images* brought up by the participants were the queen and the royal family, in addition to symbols such as English tea, the Big Ben, and St. Patrick's Day.

Differently from American people, some *personality traits* were associated to British people, like being polite and more reserved. Yet, these personal characteristics were understood as stereotypes by many of the participants. While Alice stressed how polite the people she met on the streets of London were, Bianca Inácio, on the other hand, connected the idea of British English being a "polite language" to a stereotype that

may not be real. She argued that "we all have this… image that sometimes it's not true, but it's what we- [that's what we know, what we-] yeah, that's what we… learn, right?". Bianca went on to say that "everything that I know about other countries, cultures and languages… it's pretty much what they sell to us, you know? These images [mhm]". In this sense, she argued that the image people have of Brazil abroad is probably wrong too. This is in line with Hall (2006)'s discussion of national culture acting like a representation system, where national identity is not something people are born with, but something that is formed and transformed inside representation. Thus, culture was often reduced in the narratives to recognizable and stereotypical representations of national attributes (Liddicoat & Sacarino, 2013), but, still, participants showed awareness that reality is more complex than that. In some cases, stereotypical images were broken during personal experiences, for example, when Daiana chatted with British people in an online forum:

> "eu conversando com um britânico, e ele 'mas vocês não falam espanhol?', 'não, a gente não fala espanhol!' (risos) (...) É uma coisa meio estranha... porque, assim, a imagem que a gente tem deles, pelo menos é o que a gente vê na mídia, né [uhum], que eles são, tipo, certinho, país de primeiro mundo, desenvolvido, né.. (...) então você imagina 'nossa, eles devem ter uma educação, né?' (...) aí você fala 'como é que pode isso?' (risos)" (Daiana, narrative)

The represented culture(s) of English were, thus, mostly related to *features of the inner-circle countries*. Participants recognized that cultures can be plural and connected this plurality with different geographical locations: "Eu acho que cada cultura é uma cultura única, por ter aspectos daquele lugar. Tipo, o próprio inglês tem... (...) diversos tipos de inglês [uhum], e cada lugar é característico", explained Bruna. Jade also spoke about the cultural differences among English-speaking countries, emphasizing the distance between them: "você vai ter culturas muito diferentes, por exemplo, (...) uma cultura neozelandesa não vai ter nada a ver com uma... com o inglês do Canadá [uhum, sim]. É uma coisa bem... longe uma da outra". Regional differences were also recognized within a national territory: "os Estados Unidos têm várias culturas também (...) né, se olhar por cima, se for aproximar, vai ter [aham] mais subdivisões e outra subdivisão..." (Drake, narrative).

Nevertheless, while culture was understood as a *set of practices* that vary across place, not much was said about its *variations across time and identity categories* (Liddicoat & Sacarino, 2013), with exception of Daiana, who acknowledged ethnical differences among black and white people in the United States, as especially expressed in language: "no caso dos... Estados Unidos, é a cultura, né, do negro com o branco [uhum], querendo ou não, o negro, às vezes, você vê pelo... - a maneira com que eles falam é diferente, né" (Daiana, narrative).

Beyond those differences, Eduardo emphasized that the English-speaking culture – broadly speaking – is a more "widespread culture", in the sense that it reaches out to other cultures. As it spreads around the globe, some of the participants highlighted *the influence of English on their own local practices*, such as Virgínia:

> "tipo, aqui no Brasil, tu tá andando, daí tem alguma loja em desconto, eles não colocam "desconto" ou "promoção", eles colocam "sale" [uhum] (risos), aí ficam usando, assim, palavra deles pra usar aqui e tal, porque já é - às vezes, até daqui mesmo, assim, já é uma palavra normal, né [aham], mais nem considerado estrangeiro [aham]. Aí... já é algo cultural, assim, meio que usar inglês pra essas coisas, e hot dog e... [P – aí é a cultura que é trazida de lá, que fica aqui] é [e daí fica fazendo parte da nossa cultura também? Tipo isso?] Fica. Já vai meio que se apropriando assim e fica aqui" (Virgínia, narrative).

In her observation, Virgínia describes the appropriation process of English words and cultures into Brazilian culture. She does, however, refer to the English words as "their" words ("palavras deles"), showing that even though it is a widespread language, English is still seen as pertaining to its native "owners".

In this context, with the purpose of having an idea of their knowledge of the historical dissemination of English around the globe, during the interview, participants were asked to name some of the countries which spoke English mainly as an official language. The countries – or regions – cited were the following, with the number of times cited in parenthesis: USA (13), Australia (13), Canada (11), England (10), Ireland (8), Scotland (6), Africa - unspecified (5), South Africa (5), New Zealand (4), United Kingdom or Great Britain (3),

Europe - unspecified (3), Northern Ireland (2), Wales (1), Malta (1), India (1) Pacific Islands - unspecified (1), Japan (1), Singapore (1), Philippines (1), Nigeria (1), Zimbabwe (1), Middle East – unspecified (1), the Caribbean Islands - unspecified (1), Barbados (1), Bahamas (1) and Jamaica (1). In some of the responses there may have been a misunderstanding, as the distinction between official, native, second or foreign language appeared to be blurred. This can be due to the fact that the heterogeneous and complex spread of English around the world has made such labels less and less straightforward. In that sense, Bianca Inácio said that "there is *a lot* of countries that they speak English, but I'm not sure if it's their first language, you know?"

As it can be noticed above, very few participants cited the *outer circle countries in Africa, Asia or the Caribbean*. Africa was mostly cited in broad terms, as in "ali pela África deve ter alguma coisa" (Virgínia, narrative), what illustrates the lack of knowledge people in Brazil generally have about these countries and cultures which also have a history with English but that do not usually reach us as the dominant cultures do. Chokolatchy Kentchy was the only one to mention some of the Caribbean countries and other African countries (besides South Africa). This was a result of his personal experience abroad, having met immigrants from many of these countries when living in London.

Just like Chokolatchy Kentchy, the map constructed by other participants in terms of English-speaking countries and English-related cultures is grounded in their previous experiences, not only of formal learning, as already mentioned, but also of their personal trajectories as language learners and users. As Alice narrates: "eu acho que eu aprendi mais lendo essas *fanfics* [uhum], que daí elas falam como é que é, do que aprendendo (...) pelo livro, sabe?". The practice of reading fanfics online was thus more significant to her in terms of getting to know different cultures than her English classes. In this sense, the internet plays an important role in allowing learners to perceive, at least to a certain extent, language and culture through their own lenses.

4.1.3.4. Personal identification with the represented cultures

The way learners understand the position of English in society and the way they activate their (de)identifications with the language inform their identity constructions (Jordão, 2014). In this sense, it is

relevant to investigate in what ways participants saw themselves as part of that culture they represented as relating to English. In the interviews, they were explicitly asked to tell whether they felt any identification with those cultural aspects they described.

First, to have a picture of their interests in terms of *cultural products like music, films and literature*, which are part of their everyday lives, most participants stated that the majority of products they consume are from abroad (mainly from the U.S. and the U.K.) and in English. Some of them mentioned Asian entertainment (like K-pop, J-pop and anime) and a few of them expressed their interest for Brazilian cultural products, like music. Drake noticed that the products he accesses online are usually released in English, but not necessarily from English language origin, in which case English is not associated to a specific related culture (it rather translates cultures).

As expected, the identification that stood out in the narratives was related to *American popular culture*, by influence of the media: "acho que essa parte... de ter contato com o cinema, com a música, com as séries [uhum], aí você pega um pouquinho da cultura, assim" (Jade, narrative). In several cases, this influence was felt by participants since they were a kid, what made them nurture a desire to go to the U.S.:

> "eu queria ir pros Estados Unidos, fazer o *high school* (...), eu gosto – **sempre gostei da cultura**, assim, sabe [uhum], tipo, tá muito ligada com a nossa [sim], aí deu vontade (risos)" (João, narrative).

> "I always wanted to (…) because of – like… all this culture that we see all the time and that **I always loved since I was a kid** [mhm] (…), I always had, like, this… vision of Hollywood and (…) Las Vegas, because of the huge concerts that they have there, and… Broadway, New York, and all this kind of things [mhm]. I really love it. So, yeah… [mhm] I- I guess that's like… a huge influence on me" (Bianca Inácio, narrative)

> "eu **sempre tive aquela coisa com Nova York**. O meu irmão foi pra Nova York [uhum], daí eu sempre ficava 'ai, meu Deus do céu, Nova York'" (Luana, narrative).

Not only did this identification make them desire to travel, but it also made Bruna imagine that the cultural practices she saw on TV would actually happen to her in her real life:

> "eu já quis muito, tipo, que a minha escola tivesse aqueles... armários, assim... que tivesse grupo de líderes de torcida (...), nossa, eu crescia 'não, eu vou chegar no Ensino Médio, vai ser aquela loucura de ser – de ter, é, escaninho, né (...), e ter isso e aquilo, e ter espor-", não teve (...). Foi assim, ó, foi uma decepção, pra mim, quando eu cheguei no Ensino Médio e não foi aquela coisa de filme (...), não era como me falaram (risos)" (Bruna, narrative)

Hence, the culture in the movies was so mixed to hers that Bruna could not realize, as a kid, that things around her were different. In fact, she remembered her surprise when she stopped watching dubbed movies to realize that actors actually spoke another language and shared a different culture.

While Bruna also admired cultural practices from the U.S., like people gathering together on Thanksgiving day, she showed awareness that her imagined representation may not correspond to reality: "eu, realmente, eu não sei como é que funciona lá, porque, né, pode ser totalmente diferente" (Bruna, narrative). In this sense, as Piller (2007) argues, cultures, whether they are viewed as nation, as ethnicity, as faith, or others, have in common that they are *imagined communities*, in the sense that members of a culture imagine themselves and are imagined by others as forming such group which is too large to be 'real'.

From her own experience as a member of the imagined Brazilian culture, Bianca Inácio, who desired to be a "Californian girl" as she was a kid, recognized that identities are rather multiple: "Brazilians, 'they like hot weather, they like soccer, they like samba (laughs), they like the beach', and I hate all those things (laughs) [laughs], uhm… so, (…) if we compare to the stereotype [mhm], it's like… 'oh my god, I'm not Brazilian!' (laughs)". Bianca goes on to add that she can relate to Brazil in her own way, but she believes she connects more to the stereotyped American culture than to the stereotyped Brazilian culture:

> "ah, of course, probably not all the United States, because they are also a very big country [sure] (…) if I go to Texas, it's probably very different than

> New York or… (laughs) [mhm] Los Angeles, and anything [mhm]. So… yeah, I feel like I'm way more connected to… that stereotype of the American way of life, and all that kind of thing [mhm] that… probably doesn't even exist (laughs) [laughs], but… yeah, I- I feel like, I'm more connected to that" (Bianca Inácio, narrative).

In showing that this *way of life* she identifies herself with might "not even exist", Bianca seems to agree to some extent with Piller (2007)'s statement that culture is best understood as a discursive construction, rather than something that people actually have (p. 211).

Differently from the participants above, Eduardo's process of identification with American culture was consolidated when he lived in the U.S. for a couple of months. After a few days, he was already feeling at home: "it was just… different enough… that you could call it… another culture [mhm], but… I still… could ease myself into it, you know?". In addition to the people who were very welcoming, Eduardo felt that there were more things over there that had to do with him, like music, skiing or the way of life, than in Brazil. He associated this identification to freedom: "what did make me free, again, is the same… kind of i- identity, the cultural identity [mhm], I think, that had more to do with me than what we have over here". In this sense, studying and working with English is a way to keep connected to that self-perceived freedom.

In addition to identification with American culture, participants also expressed an admiration for aspects of British culture, what might be connected to the still persisting colonial powers attached to English and also related to the cultural products they consume: "eu sou apaixonada pela Inglaterra. Se fosse, assim, se fosse pra alguém me dizer 'oh, escolhe pra onde tu quer ir, que tá tudo pago', era pra lá. Era pra lá que eu ia" (Débora, narrative). Débora attributes this passion to the influence of the series – Doctor Who and Harry Potter – that she first enjoyed in English. Daiana had a similar process of falling in love with England because of literature and movies. Besides, she is particularly fond of the Queen of England and has the dream of meeting her. Because she relates British culture with the practice of drinking tea, which is something that she also enjoys doing, this symbolically allows her to connect to that world in imagination: "querendo ou não, eu acabo me sentindo meio que britânica (...), mas nunca vai ser, né? (risos) Só um desejo, assim, né?". Other participants also identified themselves in attitudes with what they represent as being characteristic of British people, such as being polite or

being more introvert. Chokolatchy Kentchy, in particular, spoke of the values he carried with him from his years living in London, such as buying free-range eggs instead of cage eggs, as they are better for animal welfare, which was something that he did not mind before, but that in England he became aware of.

Bernardo also had a process of falling in love with Irish culture when he traveled to Ireland with his family, which was, indeed, a major topic in his interview: "eu me apaixonei por tudo, sinceramente, (…) e... tô ligado de uma tal maneira que... ao longo do dia assim, a gente – toda hora (risos) fico pensando ou falando, sabe". In terms of his personal identification with that experience, in addition to elements such as literature and the weather, Bernardo, who was born in Rio Grande do Sul, explained that:

> "eu acho... que tem uma coisa muito semelhante com... com a alma de gaúcho, entende? (...) O irlandês – hum– é, ele... ele criou um mito do irlandês... (...) com um passado histórico, mitológico (...). O gaúcho busca uma coisa assim também, entendeu? Um passado idealizado pra justificar uma diferença em relação aos outros (...). E eu senti – eu senti isso lá, e eu sinto isso em mim, entendeu? [uhum] Eu me identifico com isso" (Bernardo, narrative).

Hence, Bernardo started realizing that his strong interest for that national culture had to do with his own identity as a *gaucho*. In order to keep in contact with that experience, he likes to keep himself updated with the local Irish news on the internet, and, at the time of the interview, he was already planning a second trip with his wife and daughter.

According to Jordão (2014), for many scholars, the paradigm of learning English as a Foreign Language (as opposed to English as a Lingua Franca) denotes a context of submission to native speakers that has implications on the way learners admire and reproduce cultures related to the major native English-speaking countries. Although this may have been true for participants in this study, more than the influence of formal learning, what seemed to stand out in the narratives as impacting their admiration was their personal interactions and informal experiences with things such as music, series, literature or travelling experiences.

Still, it is important to have in mind that "exposure to a given social/cultural world (…) does not necessarily lead an individual to desire identification with that world" (Coffey & Street, 2008, p. 454). In the case of this study, Josh's perspective is a good illustration. In spite of his strong

identification with the English language, and his direct contact with things and people from the U.S. in particular, unlike other participants, he did not demonstrate a desire to connect with any particular English-related culture. In fact, he expressed his lack of interest in traveling to the U.S. (except for meeting his American ex-girlfriend, who lives there):

> "I would tell you I have zero anxious in going to the States [mhm]. I don't care. I don't care about the culture, for some reason (…), all the States kind of look the same to me, and… [laughs] its's, you know, (…) can I just go like… anywhere else instead?" (Josh, narrative).

In his opinion, even though America "has a lot of culture", it is missing in comparison to a lot of European or Asian countries that he would rather visit. Since he has been speaking English for so long, he explained that he would not feel culturally shocked if he went to America: "I have seen the people, I've seen how they (…) behave (…), I've seen how things are". More than that, he feels that the culture he would find there has nothing to add to him: "I look at Florianópolis, and I'm like (…) 'what's in here that it's not in America?'". In this sense, in Josh's case, a connection with English does not necessarily mean a connection to specific English-speaking national cultures.

The identification with the English language also does not diminish the students' sense of affiliation to their own local culture. Although some of them identified themselves more with the English-speaking world (which is referred to as "there"), there were narratives which highlighted the recognition of a cultural identity that is prior to that one and/or that coexists with it (and that is associated to "here"):

> "não adianta, beleza, eu adoro inglês, eu adoro a cultura de lá, **mas eu não sou de lá. Eu sou daqui**, eu- eu tenho coisas daqui" (Bruna, narrative).

> "I really love everything, the- the culture in here, I really like it, **I really have, like, a lot of things from here**" (Bianca, narrative).

> "eu acho que além de, sei lá, às vezes, "ai... isso aqui não tem no Brasil, essa loja que eu quero não tem aqui [risos], esse time que eu quero ver não –", sabe, essas coisas assim, não. Eu, sei lá, **me**

> **considero de jeito, assim, e de ações, bem brasileira** (risos)" (Ana Rieger, narrative).

This way, English represents for these participants an extension of their somewhat rooted identity. Additionally, the English language negative influence in the local culture and identities was also acknowledged: "a gente muitas vezes fica, uh, desprezando a cultura brasileira, né [uhum], e fica enaltecendo as outras culturas, assim, eu fico "ai, gente", né? (...), querendo ou não, vai ter essa influência, sabe, (...), o importante é a gente não esquecer da gente" (Alice, narrative). Thus, by stressing that *the important thing is not to forget ourselves*, Alice aligns herself with an intercultural view of language learning that claims for a mediation between cultures and perspectives rather than the replacement of a culture by the other (Zhu, 2013).

Hence, in identifying themselves with more than one language and more than one culture, students develop awareness to certain ways of being and doing that lead to the construction of new identities (Coffey & Street, 2008). This is well illustrated in Bianca Inácio's narrative:

> "we are a little different, when we speak – when we speak another language, because I feel like the language is not just a language, it comes with a lot of… culture, and a lot of… background. (…) So, I feel like… when we are… in our hometown, (…) everybody is like 'ok, it's like in my childhood, that I… speak like that', and then when I go to some other place, you're… completely different, because it changes your background (…). I think that everything that influences you, people… culture… and all this background that I'm speaking of [mhm], I- I feel like that's what interferes in how we think, and how we speak, and… [mhm] these things" (Bianca Inácio, narrative).

Thus, building identities involves negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in various social communities (Wenger, 1998 as cited in Carazzai, 2013). In this context, the English-speaking communities in which participants circulate and the way they experience their memberships will be discussed in the next section.

4.2. POSITIONING THEMSELVES IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD

This section is concerned with the way participants attach themselves affectively in the world, how they represent themselves as English speakers and how they try out different roles as language users.

4.2.1 Moving within and across English-speaking communities

According to Kanno (2003), an indispensable part of what shapes our identities is group membership. Our sense of membership can be related to concrete and tangible local groups such as a neighborhood or a language classroom, but also to broader global linguistic and cultural affiliations, such as a nation or a global group of fans. In their narratives, participants of this study associated themselves to a number of different social groups in which they could make use of English and construct their cultural identities in both face-to-face and virtual environments. These included their homes, schools, workplaces, a number of online networks – like online games, chat rooms, and fan forums –, among others. Some of them also expressed the desire of associating to less tangible groups, particularly to English-speaking nationhoods. In the discussion that follows, I distinguish affiliation to communities involving face-to-face communication ("real") from those involving internet-mediated communication ("virtual") and those existing only in the mind ("imagined").

4.2.1.1. Real local communities

Several participants recognized the role of their own real local communities in their development as language users. In some cases, the *regular school* place or the *private language school* they had actually attended worked as "safe houses" that sheltered their identity constructions (Clemente & Higgins, 2008). In this sense, Débora, who spent all her school years in the same school, where English was her favorite subject and where she worked as a volunteer and later as a

substitute teacher, feels today a special connection to that place: "mesmo estando aqui, eu converso com os alunos lá, eu ainda visito a escola (…), porque eu tenho um carinho muito grande por lá". Likewise, Daiana expressed how comfortable she felt in the language school she went to for 7 years, where her teacher became a friend and the main reference for her in terms of English: "já era praticamente a segunda casa".

The *language school as a workplace* was also a significant real local community for Bianca Inácio, who felt very comfortable there and discovered her love for teaching: "I get too excited when I'm in class (laughs) (…) I have, like, feedback from the students all the time, and that's like… amazing". The *university*, however, did not appear much in the narratives, probably because participants had just entered the program and were still developing a sense of membership there. Still, some of them mentioned participating in conversation groups, and Débora, in particular, spoke of the advantages of becoming part of this environment: "eu adoro aqui na universidade, de vez em quando encontrar alguém falando inglês, eu acho isso o máximo [uhum], porque lá em Vidal não tinha essa possibilidade"[6].

Many participants also had *groups of friends* around with which they spoke English and shared common interests: "Basically all of my friends that can speak in English, we always speak in English. (…), we-we do that all the time" (Bianca Inácio, narrative). This speaking in English with friends was portrayed as something natural and spontaneous to some of them: "tem vezes que eu converso com os meus amigos, principalmente um amigo meu em particular, (…) eu tô conversando em português, ele tá conversando em português, e daí do nada a gente troca pro inglês, a gente não percebe, é muito engraçado" (Jade, narrative), and more intentional to others: "eu tenho um grupo de amigos lá em Vidal e, e a gente treina o inglês, né (...), e muitas vezes a gente consegue (...) conversar melhor coisas mais pessoais em inglês (...), parece que dá menos vergonha de falar, não sei" (Débora, narrative). What they seem to

[6] Moving beyond local communities, Débora also reported her experience as a participant of the *U.S. Young Ambassadors program*. A few years ago, she was selected to take part in an English immersion week at a language school in Brasilia, together with other 134 public school students from across Brazil. Although it only lasted a week, Débora made good friends during the program, with whom she still interacts, and she thinks of this experience as a turning point in her life, portraying the program as a strong community she carries with herself.

indicate they have in common is that their networks of friends are also safe houses for building up their multilingual selves locally.

4.2.1.2. Real and imagined communities abroad

Besides the real local experiences, membership in *real communities abroad* was also highlighted in some of the narratives from students who have lived or traveled to major English-speaking countries.

Eduardo, for instance, when telling about his experience in the U.S. – which he sought on his own, for he really wanted to go abroad –, expressed how comfortable he felt there: "after a few days… it was home, you know? [mhm] And the people… were just neighbors". In fact, as suggested earlier, Eduardo felt he belonged more to the communities he participated in during this travel experience than to his local communities in Brazil. He described the people he met there as generous, friendly and receptive. Not only did he interact with American people, Eduardo also engaged in the community of foreign workers, mostly Latin Americans, who lived together. In this community, Eduardo assumed the role of helping the others communicate, as he was the one who could speak English more fluently. Although he was familiar with American culture, what made it easier for him to feel like a member of that society, he faced the misinformation of some Americans about his own cultural and linguistic background: "I don't know, maybe they – they wanted to feel - make us feel welcome or I don't know [mhm], they would say something like "Vamonos! Vamonos!" [laughs] Right. I'm going (laughs)". Still, that did not bother Eduardo and he longs to live there again.

Chokolatchy Kentchy also shared some of his membership experiences in London, to where he moved by himself in order to have an experience abroad and improve his language skills. There, Chokolatchy gradually changed from being an outsider – interacting predominantly with Brazilian acquaintances in the first months and later with other immigrants – to an insider, connecting with local people as his English skills and his job positions were progressing. In fact, he was not expecting to spend so many years there, but as he fell in love with the language and made friends in the city, he gradually felt at home. Among them, there was a British friend that Chokolatchy referred to as a "guard angel", with whom he had great affinity and who made his traveling experience more

mind opening. He first met this friend on a social network, for he wanted to connect with people and get to know how it was like to live in London before he actually started the journey.

In their narratives, for both Eduardo and Chokolatchy Kentchy, the experience of traveling abroad and of being in contact with the English language and cultures was a catalyst that changed their lives. Likewise, Bernardo's experience in Ireland was a catalyst in the same sense. He was there only for a couple of days, celebrating his daughter's 15th birthday, but the connection he felt with the place was so strong that he caught himself thinking: "pô, eu já - eu acho que eu já tenho um certo pendor pro lado dessa gente, por que será que eu... que eu gosto deles?". Although he was there as a tourist with his wife and daughter, Bernardo was impressed by how we was able to insert himself and to interact with people in the places he visited (mostly museums and sites related to James Joyce books), even though he was not proficient in English. He still revisited this experience all the time and told me that:

> "eu não acho ruim, sabe? Eu – eu fico me policiando porque... a – o – quando eu vou falar com as pessoas, as pessoas me perguntam, eu me empolgo [uhum] e aí eu fico tipo "tá vislumbrado, né". Tá, eu sei disso, né, eu tenho essa noção, entende? [sim] Só que eu não quero apagar isso, porque isso tá me motivando a fazer isso aqui também [uhum]. Eu quero usar isso, entendeu? [sim] É um... meio que um... sei lá... um - um subterfúgio assim, pra reforçar a – o meu interesse no inglês, entende? [uhum] Que eu sei que vai ser bom pra mim isso aqui [uhum]. E eu quero manter viva essa empolgação, entendeu? [sim!] Então toda vez que alguém me pergunta, eu revivo tudo de novo. Nem precisa me perguntar (...) Eu adorei. Adorei mesmo e... tô ligado de uma tal maneira que... ao longo do dia assim, a gente – toda hora (risos) fico pensando ou falando, sabe?" (Bernardo, narrative)

As Ros i Solé and Fenoulhet (2003) point out, "language learners' trajectories are reconceptualised as forays into new affective worlds, where the power of learners' imaginations and their desires become the driving force" (Ros i Solé, C., & Fenoulhet, J. (2013, p. 259). In this sense, in wishing to be part and to keep connected to the image of Ireland he constructed, in a way Bernardo attempts to participate in shared practices

of an *imagined community* (Kanno, 2003), one that he keeps connected through the power of imagination and that offers him possibilities for enhancing his identity options in the future (Norton & Toohey, 2011).

A number of other participants also suggested this connection to *imagined communities*, which have to do with the representations and identifications discussed in the previous section, and are mostly associated with traveling. Whether they are related to a particular place (the U.K., Canada, or South Corea, for instance) or to a general idea (being part of the community of native-like English speakers), these images are connected to the desire of living and experiencing "new, exciting places and people that enable participants to develop their potential and realize self-fulfilment", with are contrasted to the ordinariness of local life experiences and are facilitated by language learning (Coffey & Street, 2008, p. 458).

4.2.1.3. Virtual communities

In addition to the traveling desire, another way of escaping the tangible ordinariness of everyday life was through participation in virtual communities, which appeared as very significant in many of the narratives. These included *multiplayer online games*, a *fan forum*, a *fanfic community*, and other *social networks* like Facebook or Instagram. Some of these communities allowed the participants to interact with non-Portuguese speakers for the first time, and in all cases they seem to have joined and to actively participate in them by their own interest and initiative.

Becoming a member of such communities was not, however, easy to all of them. This was Josh's case, who since his late childhood started to play a *multiplayer online game* in American servers. Although he already had the sense he knew more English than everybody else around him, in the game he could not understand the other players, because they spoke too fast and used a specific vocabulary. So Josh felt he had to force himself to understand natives talking and the task was punishing: "because if I didn't knew something, well, I loose. And I couldn't understand anything, so (…) they kind of teach you like Simon Says, and they try to trick you" (Josh, narrative). Not only did the other gamers tried to trick him, they would also mock him for his accent, telling that he sounded like a kid or like an Indian person. This annoyed Josh at the time

and impelled him to pursue an American-like accent to be better accepted. The reason why he went to these American servers was that some alternative games he was interested in were not available in the national servers and because "I kind of wanted to have these experiences that, in Brazil, I wouldn't be able to" (Josh, narrative). In the game, there were also many other people playing from outside the U.S., as Josh could notice by their accents. He attributed his English improvement in large part to this gaming experience.

In the other narratives, experience in virtual communities seemed to be mostly favorable. Daiana spoke about her participation in an *anime fan forum* in which she had the opportunity to improve her English while chatting about topics of her interest connected to Japanese culture: "eu fui procurando por eu mesma. Eu fui entrando... em fóruns, né [uhum], em fóruns de anime, que eu gosto bastante (risos) [hum, uhum]. Aí era mais fácil de eu interagir. Aí a gente ia linkando né, o que eu aprendia lá com o inglês [aham], ia fazendo, conversando com o pessoal" (Daiana, narrative). As the forum was open and joined by people from many places in the world, one of its rules was that the language of interaction was English. Besides the discussion forum, Daiana interacted with other members (either from English-speaking countries or not) through private messages. By experiencing with language and trying to communicate, she was able to move progressively from her learning "safe house" to cultures of English language use (Clemente & Higgins, 2008). Moreover, as Daiana participated in the forum for more than 4 years, she started acting as a moderator: "então você ajuda a organizar o fórum [uhum], a vigiar, né, as regras (...), aí você usa um pouquinho mais do inglês, né, pra dar apreensão, pra conversar [aham], advertência, essas coisas". This personal process confirms that "as learners become more adept at community practices, they increase their responsibility in the community and become more active participants" (Norton & Kanno, 2003, p. 242). Today, as the university is taking a lot of her time, Daiana uses the forum more to comply with her responsibilities as a moderator than for her actual leisure. Anyhow, her experience of membership in this online space seem to have helped her develop confidence and motivation to continue learning and using English.

Similarly, Ana Rieger told about her active participation in an *online community of fanfic writers and readers*. By definition, fanfic – or fanfiction – is "writing in which fans use media narratives and pop cultural icons as inspiration for creating their own texts" (Black, 2006, p. 172). Although print fanfiction has existed for many years, Black argues that "new technologies now afford fans the opportunity to 'meet' in online

spaces where they can collaboratively write, exchange, critique, and discuss one another's fictions" (p. 172). In this sense, Ana has interacted with many fanfic writers from abroad, and she herself has published some of her writings, being surprised with the positive reception she got: "é muito engraçado, porque tu pensa, 'nossa, ninguém nunca vai ler', e daí tem, tipo - acaba tendo bastante, porque no final das contas, todo mundo – é, é uma coisa maior do que parece, assim [aham], é bem legal" (Ana Rieger, narrative). In terms of who the members of this community are, Ana told the major fanfics were written by North Americans: "porque acaba sendo mais inglês, então o pessoal é mais de lá mesmo: ou do Canadá, ou dos Estados Unidos, daí", suggesting with this explanation that these are the actual 'legitimate' English writers/speakers, although some minor fanfics were written by people from other countries. Among the people she met, Ana made friends with a Canadian girl, who is a point of connection with the culture she seeks to experience as she plans a dream trip to Canada.

These experiences in the anime forum and in the fanfic community show that mass-produced media become resources for and are integrated into fans' day-to-day interactions and activities, nourished by the cultures of *online fandoms*. By appropriating these resources and performing in such spaces, Ana Rieger and Daiana are able "to take on identities, not as (…) struggling writers or readers of English, or native or non-native speakers (…), but rather as learners and users of multiple social languages and Discourses" (Black, 2006, p. 173). Added to this is the participation in larger *social networks*, such as Twitter, where some participants interact with particular social groups, like Ana Rieger, who is a fan of ice hockey and interacts with Canadian gamers and journalists; Virgínia, who follows her favorite American band there and replies to the artists when they interact with fans; or Bianca Inácio, who chats with people who like to watch the singing competition The Voice.

The frequency of use of such social media was stressed in Bianca's narrative: "I live on Twitter, so - (laughs) (…). I speak with Americans (laughs) all the time (...), uhm… Facebook, Twitter… all the social media ever, because I think I have all the possible (laughs)", what signals how much part of everyday life this virtual world can be. Even those who do not interact much online share a feeling of belonging to English-speaking communities: "o meu contato maior é com comunidades em inglês (...), eu não – eu não me manifesto nessas redes sociais, no Facebook, no Twitter, eu não falo muito com as pessoas [uhum], mas eu sempre leio bastante" (Yumi, narrative). The virtual world is thus incorporated to participants' daily activities in a way that they can envisage themselves

as part of such communities and explore new and multiple identity possibilities.

Indeed, as the virtual site is where people from a range of different cultures and backgrounds miles apart can get together around common interests, such online practices reinforce the understanding that language – particularly English – is not "a prior system specifically tied to ethnicity, territory, birth, or nation" (Pennycook, 2004), for it emerges from social interactions that cross these categories and go beyond a geographical location (Makoni & Pennycook, 2006). Moreover, as the physical self does not always come to fore in such online settings, they can hold the potential for a "democratization of subject constitution" (Poster, 1997; Turckle, 1995, as cited in Lam, 2008), in the sense that social cues such as gender, ethnicity, or class are attenuated (Lam, 2008), allowing users to construct their selves more freely.

In this sense, some experiences narrated by the participants show that nationality or other cultural traces of the people they interact with are not often identifiable and/or relevant for their online interactions, such as in Bianca Inácio's story (about an interaction in Portuguese):

> "so, yeah, I- I have actually spoken to someone in Portuguese, on Twitter, and then, like, sometime later I found out that he was… from a country that I didn't even know that existed [mhm] I was like "oh, that's cool, I guess, that's weird" (laughs) [mhm]. **Sometimes I'm speaking with people and then I go to their profiles and I'm like "ok, you're from – what is that place again?**" (Bianca Inácio, narrative)

Additionally, Bianca narrated that sometimes she is speaking to people in English on Twitter and only later finds out that they are actually from Brazil: "usually I'm on Twitter, and I'm (…) talking (…), and after months, I- I find out that they are Brazilians and not American [laughs]. Uhm, and we're all speaking in English, and that's like the funniest thing". Hence, acknowledging the fact that people from multiple locations can share the same online space and may use English without distinctions of the native/non-native type, the internet opens space for engagement in intercultural communication featuring English as a *lingua franca*.

As for the other virtual communities discussed here (multiplayer game, anime forum, and fanfic community), participants explained how the members' identity traits appeared or not within these settings:

> "there's the game, and… the way the game works is you have… a character, right? (…) and of course they'll have a user name, so, like, I don't know, the guy's name is like… (…) mememaker69, and you can see his user name. And if you wanna, like, go to the… to his profile, you can access the profile, but, you know, I – I didn't really used to that [mhm], I mean, people – **most people don't really care about the profile [mhm] for games, they just kind of have an user name, that's it** [mhm]. Uhm… so, no, I don't have like a direct connection to many people like that [mhm], just kind of seen their user name, heard them speak" (Josh, narrative).

> "quando você faz o cadastro, tem lá, não é obrigatório, mas você pode colocar, né, a língua que você fala, né, de onde você é, (…). Você não usa seu nome, se você quiser, né, no fórum, você pode usar um nickname, um apelido [uhum], como você quer ser conhecido no fórum [uhum]. Então**... é meio difícil você saber se você tá falando com um japonês, ou - [entendi], a não ser que ele fale**. [Mas aí você pode abrir o perfil – ah, se a pessoa tiver colocado] É, se ela tiver colocado. Se não, você começa a conversar com ela e vai interagindo, né" (Daiana, narrative).

> "[tu sabe quem escreveu, de onde que é?] Não. **Só se é alguém que tu tem muito interesse, tipo, "nossa, essa pessoa escreve muito bem", daí tu vai ver o perfil da pessoa**, tipo, no Twitter, ou em outras redes sociais [ah tá, tem que buscar a pessoa], daí tu sabe, se não, não, né" (Ana Rieger, narrative).

Such excerpts suggest that online membership and identities are constructed regardless of "real life" personal attributes, such as nationality, and that students engage in communities where English and popular culture are the point of connection among members who do not share a pre-defined identity. In this sense, they also illustrate how such online spaces provide opportunities for them "to fashion linguistic and cultural identities for themselves; in essence, multiliterate and

transcultural identities that extend beyond traditional geographic borders such as the nation-state" (Black, 2006, p. 170).

Although the majority of the representations of the English language and related cultures presented by the students were mostly connected to particular English-speaking nations and hegemonic cultures, these reported experiences in real, virtual and imagined communities, particular those in virtual communities, signal the possibility of understanding identity in a different way, one in which borders might start to fade away, as suggested by Carazzai (2013).

Having discussed how students in this study locate themselves in the numerous English-speaking communities they take (or wish to take) part, it is now relevant to analyze how they situate themselves as either legitimate or illegitimate speakers in the English-speaking world and what they understand by being an "English speaker".

4.2.2. Locating themselves as English speakers

In this section, I present and analyze in what ways participants portrayed themselves as English speakers (or not), taking into account the relevant experiences, feelings and representations they brought into their narratives.

4.2.2.1. "Are you an English speaker?"

When asked whether they considered themselves English speakers, the majority of the participants said yes, while four said no and two were not sure.

Among those who said yes, some answered the question quite affirmatively, especially those who were carrying out the interview in English, while others justified their answers this way:

> "é... assim, **eu não sou 100% fluente, mas eu consigo... acho que me virar**, eu acho, sabe?

> [aham]. Tipo, eu não ficaria completamente perdido hoje (risos)" (Drake, narrative).
>
> "eu considero. De – **pelos testes que eu já fiz, pelas aulas que eu já tive, pelas comunicações que eu já tive** com gente de fora, **eu considero**" (Yumi, narrative).
>
> "assim, se, se for falar em compreensão e resposta, eu me considero. Eu sei que ainda tenho muito o que aprender, e claro que também é por isso que eu tô no curso, né, mas eu me considero**, eu acho que – morrer lá fora eu não morreria (risos)**" (Débora, narrative).
>
> "ah, considero. **Eu acho que eu sei, mas eu tenho vergonha ainda**. De, tipo, falar só inglês, ou situações que tem que falar só em inglês, porque não é uma coisa que – por exemplo, eu não tive a oportunidade de viajar pro exterior ainda, então não tenho essa... - de tá em situações que eu sou obrigada a falar" (Ana Rieger, narrative).

In such excerpts, speaking English was associated with being able to communicate orally regardless of perfect fluency. It is relevant to observe that despite Ana Rieger's ability to write fanfics in English and successfully interact with people online, she was not quite confident in her answer, as she expressed her fear to be in a speaking situation: "tipo, ai, vai que eu falo errado, vai que – sei lá, um constrangimento".

This doubt was also present in the narratives of the two participants who were not sure whether they considered themselves English speakers:

> "eu não sei, assim, tipo, as pessoas perguntam, assim 'nossa, Bruna, mas tu fala inglês?', aí já dá aquela coisa, assim, **'não, gente, eu não falo, eu falo só algumas coisas, assim, às vezes...',** eu conseguiria – eu não sei se eu conseguiria ter uma conversa com alguém (...), ah, vai sair tudo errado!" (Bruna, narrative)
>
> "**mais ou menos**. Eu já fui melhor. Já fui bem melhor, bem sinceramente, assim. Eu perdi um pouco da... do jeito, assim" (Luana, narrative)

Bruna, similar to participants in Souza (2017)'s study, manifested the desire of speaking English but avoided exposure for fear of being judged: "eu tenho essa curiosidade, de, tipo, 'ah, não, vamo se falar', mas eu acho que eu vou... que eu vou falar tudo às avessas, e daí vai ficar, tipo, 'ah, nossa, ela tá falando tudo errado'" (Bruna, narrative). This concern is linked to her belief that people abroad will correct her and judge her over small mistakes, as she was told there is a huge prejudice against Brazilians outside the country – although she could not say where exactly. Luana, in her turn, narrated a situation in which she overcame her fear to speak, as she interacted with a German family that took a ride with her: "eu tava com medo de falar, sabe, eu ficava quietinha, assim (...), mas depois, quando eu vi que eu conseguia falar, que eu tava entendendo (...) foi bem tranquilo, assim, achei que ia ser bem pior (risos)" (Luana, narrative).

As for the participants who did not consider themselves English speakers, the following excerpts illustrate their views:

> "falante, falante, *não*... (...) **Eu não sou muito boa pra falar**. Acho que eu tenho uma certa, assim... como é que eu vou dizer... intimidação pra falar (...), então, fica meio que (...) 'será que eu vou falar certo? Será que eu não vou falar certo?'" (Daiana, narrative).

> "falante, não (risos). (...) Ainda não (risos). [P – Como é que tu te vê, como aprendiz?] **Aprendiz [uhum], ainda**. (...) O melhor, ainda, por enquanto, é com a leitura, com o entendimento, assim [aham], até mesmo ouvir do que falar. Falar ainda tenho dificuldade" (Virgínia, narrative).

> "olha, **eu me considero mais uma *leitora* de língua inglesa do que uma falante**, sabe? (risos) [risos] (...) . Não que eu não saiba falar, sabe [uhum], mas não tenho mais prática" (Alice, narrative)

> "quando a gente vai improvisar uma conversa, eu já me atrapalho, sabe? (...) não é só pra – o e – eu não conseguir pronunciar direito a palavra, é da estrutura da frase, **ainda não entrou bem na minha cabeça** (...), mas eu tô animado (...), porque eu já sinto... [o avanço] avanços, entende? (...)

> apesar de algumas dificuldades, eu vou superar" (Bernardo, narrative).

Except for Bernardo, who was taking English classes at beginner level, the other students were dismissed from these classes because they already had the required proficiency in the language; still, they could not see themselves as English speakers. In fact, some of them placed emphasis on the word *speaker*, for they did not feel competent to speak yet, or to speak "correctly", arguing that they were *readers* or *learners* instead. Perhaps the reference to the action of *speaking* in the question "Do you consider yourself an English speaker?" has helped them to exclude the relevance of written communicative practices (as in writing or typing) that do not require speaking and in which they are commonly engaged. In this sense, as interactions online are becoming ever more part of everyday life and more part of students' learning processes, we should opt for terms such as language "user" instead of language "speaker" so as to be more encompassing for all communicative forms.

So even though Virgínia is a reference for her friends and family in terms of knowledge in English, even though Alice reads stories and news in English quite "automatically", even though Daiana interacted for years on the internet – an arena that is more accepting of language experimentation (Lam, 2008), and even though they all have a strong affection for English, they seem not to consider this enough to call themselves English speakers. Again, the fear to speak was expressed in Alice's narrative when she told about a debate presentation she had in class: "sabe, às vezes eu consigo falar bem, às vezes eu falo na minha cabeça inglês, assim, sabe, daí dava, mas aí pra falar na hora, não dá (risos)".

It can be argued that such fear of making mistakes that several participants expressed has to do with the way they are seen as non-native speakers in the cultural system that surrounds them, making them perceive themselves as not competent enough in comparison to native, 'genuine' speakers. In this sense, if they cannot join the native speaker community, they would see no choice, "but to adopt one of the two remaining identity options offered by the dominant discourse of native-speakerness: 'non-native speaker' or 'L2 learner'" (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 259). This issue is further discussed in the next subsection, as it analyzes the participants' representations of native and non-native speakers of English and their self-construction in those terms.

4.2.2.2. Legitimacy in speaking: the native vs. non-native dichotomy

As Pavlenko (2003) demonstrates, English student teachers (or students only) who do not speak English as their first language can think of themselves as peripheral members of the EFL/ESL community because of their non-nativeness, or as legitimate, multicompetent members of a larger imagined community. Here, I bring some of the students' voices as to how they represent – if they do – the meanings of native and non-native speaking, and how they see themselves in terms of the categories above.

First, I would like to highlight that participants expressed recognition of the existence of different varieties of English (refusing the idea that there is one single way of speaking) based on their previous experiences with the language. For example, Josh noticed the different ways international gamers spoke, besides realizing, through his interest for Japanese culture, that Japanese people had "an interesting way of talking in English". Débora and Bianca, in their turn, could notice differences by watching the TV program *The Voice* from various countries in the world, while Virgínia and Daiana acknowledged watching TV series, like *Dr. Who*, which showed English-speaking characters of different nationalities. Beyond the differences in accent, Daiana also faced textual variations when chatting with members of the anime forum, in terms of lexicon and of register (as some would speak with abbreviations and others would not), and Ana Rieger noticed different ways of writing in the fanfic community, being able to make assumptions such as "this writer is American" or "this writer is British" by the expressions they used. Ana also spoke about channels that she follows on YouTube which are from New Zealand and Australia (which sounded strange for her at first, but she got used to them with time).

Such examples show that the way participants perceive differences in language vary from person to person according to the groups they belong to and the contents they are in contact with – particularly on the internet. Besides such experiences online, some of them had the opportunity to notice differences in person when meeting foreign tourists, talking to exchange students or even with their English teachers. Overall, they expressed openness and curiosity towards that diversity. Still, what they seemed to stress more were the differences between standard American and British English.

Indeed, many participants placed a high value on native-like ways of speaking in their narratives. For instance, Bianca Inácio, when telling about her experience in Europe, observed that:

> "I've been to France, and… Germany and Austria, so… it was basically – I- I was speaking English there, but it wasn't their language there (…), it's not like going to England or… the United States, or maybe Canada… Australia…where they really, really speak English" (Bianca Inácio, narrative).

By affirming that people in the inner-circle countries "really, really speak English", whereas people in other countries do not, Bianca is placing legitimate ownership of the language solely on the so called 'owners', i.e. the speakers from these countries. Moreover, when narrating about a time she met a British tourist, with whom she spoke for a couple of hours and who observed her English was really good, she said that:

> "it's that kind of thing, uh (…), when an English teacher tells you that 'oh, you have a nice English', first, it's like 'oh, ok, that's really cool', but when a native person says that, it's… like, that changes something (laughs). At least for me it did. 'Cause I was like 'really? Ok'. I- I felt more… you know, comfortable [uh-huh]. And I feel like… for this reason, I started to feel more comfortable… *with* the language, in general" (Bianca Inácio, narrative).

In this sense, Bianca stressed the importance of getting legitimation from a native of the inner-circle countries – which would be the proper person to evaluate her English - in order to gain confidence as an English speaker. This suggests that natives are still seen as the repository of truth about language.

A similar representation was present in Josh's narrative, as he told about his experience in online games. Particularly referring to the non-native gamers, he said that: "when you're speaking in a… more like a server, like I said, culture comes in [mhm], and then you start listening to people who are speaking in English, but they're not– their pronunciation is wrong too". Using the adverb *too* to include himself in that group, he implies that he also spoke incorrectly, if considered from the point of view of the native-speaking gamers, particularly the Americans, whom he

considers the standard to be achieved. Such experience in the games led him to perceive American English accent as the 'regular', 'genuine' or 'natural' accent, as the following excerpt illustrates: "I don't really remember any of my English teachers, in fact, my best friend which is really close to me, I never heard her speak… an English… that sounded English", and he goes on to clarify: "an English that sounds *American*", implying that his teachers did not spoke 'real' English.

Thus, because of this background, in Josh's point of view, being a competent speaker has to do with the way one sounds like. In this sense, having a native-like accent would be quite important on a professional level, if one wants to become an English teacher:

> "I don't wanna be seen as American, but I wanna be seen… as I'm… competent, because, think about it, if you're gonna go to – to be a teacher, you know, in Japan, in America [mhm], in England… and you *soundji* like this, people look at you and will be like 'is this guy really *goodji atchi* English?'" (Josh, narrative).

Hence, as language is an instrument of power, and as an utterance's value and meaning are determined in part by the value and meaning ascribed to the person who speaks (Bourdieu, 1977), in the situation above, the non-native person, identified as such by the way he sounds (see Zhu, 2013), is regarded as incompetent or as an 'illegitimate' speaker of English by an imagined legitimate speaker. With this is mind, in order to guarantee his right to speech in the English-speaking community he envisages, Josh sought to perfect his accent to be as native-like as possible. He was able to accomplish this especially after starting a distant relationship with an American girl, who would indicate where he needed improvement and served as a speaker model for him.

American accent was also depicted as the standard or 'normal' way of speaking – and even of learning – in other narratives, like in: "o meu sotaque é bem... americano, assim, bem... de aprender inglês mesmo (...), o meu sotaque é bem... normal (risos)" (Jade, narrative). But while Jade seemed to be in good terms with her accent, João suggested that he did not speak 'as normal as' a native speaker, even though he recognized that there is no single 'correct' accent: "eu mesmo falando, (...) eu acho que eu falo normal, assim, mas eu já vi, tipo – ouvindo, (...) depois que eu falo, meu (...) (risos)". Similarly, drawing on the native ('they') vs. non-native ('us') dichotomy, Alice observed that: "quando tu vai falar com

alguém que, tipo, que é inglês, assim, né, ou americano e tal, se fala inglês, eles vão perceber que tu não é – que tu, tipo, (...) é um turista, sabe [aham], não é a mesma falante da língua" (Alice, narrative). By saying this, she implies that the non-native speaker – and consequently herself – is a permanently unfinished speaker.

On the other hand, some of the participants recognized the value of personal accents, particularly of non-native speakers. For instance, Virgínia stressed that it would be impossible to erase one's own accent: "sempre puxa um pouco o brasileiro, é meio impossível tirar, assim". Also, Débora, referring to her experience during the English Immersion Program, when she got to know people from all parts of Brazil, narrated a change in her perspective towards accents (in Both English and Portuguese):

> "cada inglês vinha carregado de uma identidade [aham] (...), eu achei maravilhoso. Eu virei uma amante de sotaques assim (risos) [risos]. Eu gosto muito de ouvir, de perceber. Antes a gente – antes eu tinha, né, é... um pouco de preconceito, (...) e, meu Deus, agora eu sou apaixonada por todos os sotaques, adoro." (Débora, narrative)

Hence, differently from Josh's experiences, Débora's life experiences made her recognize and value linguistic diversity and consequently the voice of non-native speakers, like hers. As a result, in telling how she felt when she spoke with native-speaking people for the first time and how she feels now, she showed much more confidence: "eu lembro que dá muito medo de falar errado ou de a gente falar algum absurdo e eles acharem engraçado (...), hoje em dia eu não sinto mais esse medo, (...) eu acho que eu – eu tenho muito mais confiança" (Débora, narrative). In this sense, she suggested that she has begun to accept her English in its own right, rather than evaluating it against a native-speaker English benchmark, a perspective that is in consonance with the World English paradigm (Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011).

As indicated earlier in this section, such perspective was not shared by all participants, for several of them felt uncomfortable to speak with native English speakers with fear of being judged: "ah, você fica nervoso, sabe, fica falando bobagem" (João, narrative), what may connect to Norton (2001)'s view that language learners are at times most uncomfortable speaking to people they see as gatekeepers to the imagined communities they are trying to enter (as cited in Pavlenko, 2003). However, even though most of the participants seemed to place

themselves in the periphery of the English-speaking community, based on a native-speaking parameter, some of their comments demonstrate that they have started to face a new role: that of English language users in an interconnected world. The next section will add to this discussion as it brings the participants' views on what they still strive to achieve as English speakers/users.

4.2.2.3. Describing their English-speaking ideals

In the interviews, students were asked to tell if they had any ideals they were pursuing as English speakers. Reinforcing what was previously shown, some of the answers reflected the impact of the native speaker discourse (Pavlenko, 2003), as several participants desired to speak like a native – even though they emphasized they could not speak *exactly* as one. The idea of "speaking like a native" varied from (1) having a native-like accent and passing as a native person (a more external aspect), like in:

> "eu quero chegar e falar com alguém e falar 'nossa, você é daqui? Você sabe muito bem falar inglês' e daí eu "nossa, é, eu sou, surpresa' (risos)" (Alice, narrative)

> "com aquele sotaque britânico lindo (...), eu quero. Eu vou passar uns dois anos lá, só pra pegar sotaque" (Luana, narrative)

to (2) mastering the language in the same way they do with Portuguese (a more internal aspect), as in:

> "eu quero falar bem, entendeu? Ter uma fluência, mas... eu não pretendo, assim, atingir algum sotaque, ou coisa do tipo, sabe? [uhum] Eu só quero, não sei, falar, ser compreendido e... falar 100% fluente" (Drake, narrative).

> "tipo, a – os pensamentos fluírem... (...), tipo, você conseguir falar tudo que você quiser, que tá na tua cabeça, sem, sei lá, reformular porque você não consegue achar [uhum] uma outra forma" (Jade, narrative)

Other participants showed a critical stance towards native-like proficiency and drew their ideals as speakers in a different way. Questioning the existence of a standard model of English, Milroy (1999) reminds us that no one actually speaks a standard language, for "standard languages are fixed and uniform-state idealisations" (p. 18). In this sense, Débora argued that: "não tem como *eu* querer falar como um nativo, até - eu vou falar como um nativo de onde? [uhum] Né, eu vou falar como um nativo do Brooklyn? [esse nativo ideal não existe assim, né] É, não tem como eu me espelhar num". Instead, her current ideal as an English speaker is to return to her hometown (or her region) as a teacher and open her students' eyes to the mind-expanding opportunities that English can facilitate to them. Some other narratives also illustrate this critical stance:

> "eu tinha muito isso {de querer falar como nativa}, só que (...) conforme eu fui entrando na faculdade, não sei, vendo as outras pessoas, que talvez isso não seja tão importante pra mim, sabe? (...) sei lá, eu prefiro muito mais... como falante, na verdade, é mais ter confiança, saber me expressar, e, tipo, mesmo se eu não souber exatamente uma coisinha, dar um jeito [uhum], e mais, seria daí um objetivo com o inglês na escrita, de conseguir escrever, assim, coisas *bem* longas, (...) mas daí não é - é mais de escrita em si do que só inglês (risos)" (Ana Rieger, narrative).

> "eu já... parei com essa coisa, com certeza [uhum], de querer falar como nativo, acho que... graças à deusa, né, porque... [hum] é... esse é um – isso leva muito à frustração... (...) eu vejo muito importante a questão de sotaque e identidade, não vejo mais como uma coisa negativa [aham], então... isso morreu, felizmente [uhum], né? Mas eu acho, assim, eu gosto sempre de aprender, eu tô sempre olhando expressões novas" (Chokolatchy Kentchy, narrative).

In the excerpts above, Ana Rieger suggested that her desire is for language use instead of language ownership (Clemente & Higgins, 2008) and Chokolatchy Kentchy stressed the importance of respecting one's own accents and identities. Hence, in seeking the validation of their performance in terms of communicative success instead of complying to a role model, some students signaled that they are constructing

themselves as legitimate English users rather than as failed native speakers (Pavlenko, 2003).

Now, before moving to the last section – which will focus on students' performances with English –, a few more words will be said on the way they depicted their emotions and subjectivities when speaking/using English as an additional language.

4.2.2.4. Different languages, different selves

During the interviews, participants were finally asked whether they felt any different when speaking English, particularly in comparison to when they spoke their first language. Like in Coffey and Street (2008)'s study, some of the participants suggested they adopted, through English, an alter ego that was afforded greater 'license' than that which speaks Portuguese. That was not, however, a straightforward idea to all of them, as many seemed to be speaking about it or even reflecting on this for the first time. Eduardo, for instance, replied that "that's weird, but… yes. I do feel a little different. (…) I've no idea why, but I feel slightly more… daring, I think that's the word I'm looking for".

In fact, several students connected their use of English with a sense of freedom and with a less shy version of themselves: "Eu acho que tem coisas que eu consigo falar melhor em inglês (...), parece que dá menos vergonha de falar, não sei (...), talvez nesse sentido de escudo, mesmo" (Débora, narrative). Jade shared a similar feeling: "eu me considero uma pessoa meio tímida, assim [uhum], bastante, eu acho, e... quando eu falo inglês, eu me sinto menos tímida (...), acho que não carrega tanto significado... (...), parece que é mais fácil". In this sense, using an additional language seems to afford to these students a sort of detachment from the weight of their first-language meanings, to which their identities are more bound. The new, 'fresh' words of the additional language may thus facilitate the engagement with a new identity, because, according to Pavlenko (2014), these words are "not imbued with anxieties and taboos, they do not erupt in heteroglossia of voices, images, and memories, they do not constrain (…), do not impose (…), do not feel as real, powerful and hurtful as those of the L1" (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 280).

In what comes to exploring a new identity, a number of participants stressed that they do feel they incorporate a different personality when

speaking English. Differences ranged from modification in their voice tones to changes in mood, as described in Bianca Inácio's narrative:

> 'I feel like my voice is different (laughs) [mhm]. Uhm… yeah, I feel like it's a different… it's like your mind switches… you know? When you are speaking in Portuguese and when you are speaking in English. When I'm speaking in English, I- I feel like having a… like I'm a character of something, you know? Like… I'm usually happier speaking in English. I have like this smile all the time, and I'm always excited… when I'm in Portuguese, I feel like… it's… speaking in Portuguese is… more home, you know? So it's like… I go home and all of the problems that we have at home [mm], it's like really… [mhm] Portuguese. It's like… I don't know how that works, but yeah, I feel like it's… completely different" (Bianca Inácio, narrative).

When pointing out that she feels like "a character of something", Bianca is calling attention to the imaginative aspect of her identity construction. Such aspect was also salient in Bruna's narrative, when she argued that:

> "eu me sinto numa série (...), incrivelmente o meu comportamento muda, assim [como se fosse um personagem, assim?], é, não sei por que... nem sempre, assim, às vezes eu tô falando normal, mas às vezes parece que eu... incorporo, assim, "não, agora eu estou falando inglês" [risos], 'agora eu sou diferente'" (Bruna, narrative)

In connecting her English-speaking self to the cultural world of TV series and movies that seduces her, Bruna allows herself to feel part of that world through imagination – a world in which she can be or at least pretend to be someone else, and where she can inhabit her body in more powerful ways (Kramsch, 2009, p. 16).

Finally, even though some participants expressed they felt better when speaking or writing in English instead of Portuguese, some others emphasized that this feeling varied according to the social context and the particular communities involved:

> "eu acho que escrever, eu fico mais à vontade em inglês, mas, falar, mais à vontade em português (...), e daí é só por – tipo, ambientes que tá, né,

> porque quando eu tô falando, eu tô com as pessoas do meu dia-a-dia, que são todas brasileiras, falam português, e quando eu tô escrevendo, eu tô mais num espaço em que todo mundo usa o inglês [uhum] (...), acho que é mais disso" (Ana Rieger, narrative).

More than a matter of language, Chokolatchy Kentchy observed that the type of social interaction also plays a role in how one feels:

> "eu acho que há momentos– é a, a interação social, que depende... de onde eu tô falando português [uhum], e de onde eu tô falando inglês (...) porque, por exemplo, eu vejo, quando eu tô dando aula (...), eu me sinto super... é, à vontade de falar, e eu falo... mega fluentemente. Mas, por exemplo, o ano passado, quando eu fui – voltei pra Inglaterra pra visitar, depois de 2 anos, é... eu me sentia, de novo, em alguns momentos, me auto-monitorando, quando eu tava falando com... pessoas nativas (...), então, assim, sabe, é tudo mais complexo, mas mesmo em português [uhum], dependendo da situação, eu tô mais à vontade de ficar falando algumas... fazendo algumas brincadeirinhas, (...) e em alguns momentos eu vou ser mais formal, vou tá monitorando a minha fala, então... (…) eu não diria que é a língua. A língua, claro, mas... a situação também é muito importante" (Chokolatchy Kentchy, narrative)

Hence, in highlighting that the type of social situation influences the way he feels and presents himself, Chokolatchy Kentchy reminds us that subjectivity is not stable, but rather produced in a variety of social sites, which are structured by relations of power and in which people take up different subject positions (Norton Pierce, 1995), such as teacher, student, non-native speaker, and so forth.

With this in mind, the next subsection will finally draw on the particular positions students were taking or wishing to take in English, especially those in which they were able to perform as legitimate English speakers/users, and on how they envisage their futures within this setting.

4.2.3. Building the present and the future: agency as language users

Understood as the ability to act upon our identities in relation to the discursive possibilities that are culturally available (Silva, 2014), *agency* is an important aspect of additional language learning. By developing agency, students can appropriate others' discourses, carrying their individual accents, desires, and actions (Vitanova, 2002). In this context, rather than simply socializing into existing social groups, identity is seen as a "reflective and generative process for constructing alternative social networks and subject positions" (Lam, 2000, p. 476). How students try out new roles for themselves as language users is the focus of this subsection, together with a discussion on their projections for the future.

4.2.3.1. Performing in English

Performance in language, according to Canagarajah, means "doing things with words, not just expressing ideas or displaying one's grammatical proficiency" (2008, p. x). In this sense, here I discuss what participants in this study were doing with English, especially as teachers, writers, translators, and internet users, roles that appeared in this set of narratives.

One of the major activities students engaged or wished to engage in was *teaching*. Among those who had already experienced teaching, Bianca Inácio reported how comfortable and free she felt in that position, uniting the things she liked (such as music and speaking to people) with the English classroom practices. She saw her role as teacher as that of helping other people access the 'language that connects everyone', and felt her position in the school legitimized by students' positive feedback. In her turn, Débora, who worked as a volunteer student-teacher and later as a substitute teacher in her hometown's public school, acted to encourage students' participation in exchange programs and to open their eyes to wider life opportunities. Recognizing that English allowed her to enhance her identity and willing to see this taking place with her students, she was glad to say that one of them was going to participate in the English Immersion program just as she did. By describing how she envisaged her teaching role there in her hometown, Débora's performance is in line with Kanno (2003)'s understanding that not only "our community participation affects our sense of who we are, but also

(…) we have the ability to shape the nature of the communities to which we belong" (Kanno, 2003, p. 13).

A second type of performance to appear frequently in the narratives concerned *writing*. A number of participants enjoyed writing in English and a few of them published pieces of writing online (e.g. Ana Rieger, who created fanfics; Josh, who was writing his first novel; and Bruna, who posted her poems on social media). According to Pavlenko (2011), by performing in English through writing, particularly when publishing, students find in the space of the text a favorable discursive space for the negotiation of their identities, because such space allow for writers to reinvent themselves and to have their voices imbued with authority. "Eu sempre quis escrever, sempre foi, tipo, uma das coisas que eu mais gostei de fazer", told Ana, who, in the past, entered the Journalism program to find it discouraging for herself as a writer. It was in the English-speaking fanfic world that Ana could gain confidence, as she received a positive response from other readers/writers and could develop an identity as a successful and multiliterate writer.

In Josh's case, the experience with writing was a bit unusual. He told he was developing his own book project, although he had just recently read the first book of his entire life: "in fact, I *finished* writing the first chapter of my book *before* I ever read a book [laughs], which is very controversial, (…) my story is probably really bad, but I try" (Josh, narrative). His motivation to carry out this project had to do with his ex-girlfriend: she enjoyed literature, so he wanted to memorialize their story through writing. More than that, the book project was also a space for Josh to explore his creativity, as he described building up a fictional world that combined reality and fantasy, and that mixed classic Latin culture with Japanese culture – a culture in which he was also interested.

Even the participants who did not publicize their writings engaged in this practice as a way to free their thoughts and explore their emotions with English: "eu escrevo tipo num caderno meu, assim [hum, uhum], tenho tipo um diário, eu escrevo muito assim", told João, who dreams to become a literature writer in the future. Jade also wrote song lyrics and film reviews for herself. Sometimes, keeping their writings private may relate to lack of confidence, as this might be Bianca Inácio's case: "I like to write (...) poems, music, and sometimes stories, but… I don't feel that any of them are good still, so, I hope one day (laughs)". As Zamel (1997) points out, writing can have a reflective and generative power for learners in creating their own voices in the additional language. Those who were not self-assured yet sought to improve their abilities and gain confidence in the undergraduate program.

In what comes to *translating*, as several participants aspired to become translators, some of them narrated their engagement or attempt of engagement in translation practices, particularly online. One of them was Drake, who experienced producing subtitles for an English video on YouTube with a tool that the website provides. Although he did it mostly to gain experience with subtitling, by doing this Drake was contributing for Portuguese-speaking YouTube users to have access to a particular piece of information that was only available in English. The other participant was Jade, who once applied to translate pieces of news from a fan site about a South Korean artist. Although she was not accepted – as they chose someone who was older than her – still this experience showed Jade's willingness in using her knowledge to make information of her interest accessible to other Portuguese-speaking fans.

Indeed, as suggested before, internet is a space where students can engage in a number of transborder language practices and where they can exercise their agency and build up new identities for themselves – which are often not available to them in the local environment (Lam, 2008). Within these practices, performing in English through *online interaction*, particularly in texting/chatting, allowed participants to create affiliations and construct relationships with people from distant parts of the world. In fact, nearly all the participants reported having interacted in English with other internet users. This took place in social networks, chat rooms, and in the other communities described in the previous section.

In some cases, these interactions led to close friendship (as it happened to Ana Rieger, Chokolatchy Kentchy and Jade) and even to romantic relationship (as it happened to Josh, who met his American ex-girlfriend on a broadcasting website). Jade's narrative is illustrative of how students, in performing in English online, are able to establish relationships of affinity with other non-native speakers of English, what Clemente and Higgins (2008, p. 6) describe as interculturalism:

> "tenho uma amiga coreana [uhum], que a gente conversa em inglês, porque né? [sim] (...) também é engraçado, porque ela não sabe falar inglês direito [uhum], então às vezes eu ajudo ela, tipo, eu ensino coisinhas em inglês pra ela, e ela me ensina coisinhas em coreano (...), é bem legal [é uma amiga virtual?], é [uhum], nunca vi ela (...), foi pelo... Instagram, eu acho, alguma coisa assim... [uhum], uma encontrou a outra, e mandou mensagem, assim" (Jade, narrative).

Here it is important to point out that although Jade argues that her Korean friend does not speak English accurately, she is not implying that she has less right to use English than Jade (or any other English user).

In fact, in opposition to the value attributed to native speakerness, as discussed in the previous section, in the various practices participants described in their narratives, they seemed to be constantly performing in English and developing themselves – even if not aware - as legitimate owners of their additional language. In addition to the practices discussed above, performance also included the several face-to-face social interactions students had in their local environments or abroad. Some of these interactions were corroborative of Canagarajah (2008)'s argument that "even with ungrammaticality one can accomplish one's interests effectively and project desired identities" (p. x). This was the case of Bernardo, who, surprised on how he was able to establish interactions with Irish people with a considerably 'poor' English during his recent trip, showed confidence on his potentiality to go after his dreams after having refused to learn the language for a long time.

4.2.3.2. Imagining the future

As Norton and Toohey (2011) reminds us, a learner's hopes for the future are an integral part of language learner identity. In this sense, I discuss here the future plans and desires participants shared in their narratives, understanding that desire in language learning is connected to exploring various possibilities of the self in real or imagined encounters with others (Kramsch, 2009).

To begin, I refer to Bruna's narrative, who used to plan and dream up her future since she was a young kid:

> "aos 6 anos (...) eu decidi planejar a minha vida inteira. Então, eu decidi que até... os 12 eu ia fazer balé, aí dos 12 aos 16, eu ia fazer teatro, e aí eu ia interpretar em novela e fazer peças... não aconteceu, obviamente [risos], e... dos 16 até... os 20... 25, parece, eu ia ser cantora, é, compositora, e... até... acho que dos 30 em diante, eu ia ser... escritora (...). Eu dizia, 'não, olha só, vai ter- mãe, vai ter uma página na Wikipedia dizendo, é, cantora, compositora, escritora... [aham] atriz....

> (…) aquela que olhasse 'nossa, essa biografia'" (Bruna, narrative).

Although English was not indispensable in that dream picture, it could still enable her to achieve some of these aspirations. Also, while at first Bruna did not desire to pursue a career in teaching, now she has recently changed her mind about it: "minha mãe veio com a ideia assim 'não, Bruna, então faz assim, ó, já que tu gosta de música, tu dá aula de inglês... cantando!' (...) ou então fazer teatro, aí... eu comentei com a minha mãe que eu ia fazer tudo aquilo que eu ia ser na Wikipedia, só que dando aula" (Bruna, narrative). This way, Bruna found a way to connect the possibilities of self that she had envisaged as a child to her recent imaginary performance as an English teacher.

Like Bruna, many other participants imagined themselves as English teachers, having this as their main career plan. As showed earlier, this was particularly the case of Bianca Inácio, Débora, Josh, Chokolatchy Kentchy and Ana Rieger, whose life experiences have led them to grow affection for and build the prospect of teaching. Luana also expected to become a teacher and was looking forward to gain some initial experience. With the exception of Ana, who desired to become a university literature professor, the others showed interest in teaching in schools, seeing this task as personally rewarding for them and for their current or future students. Recognizing the material and symbolic benefits English has brought (or will bring) to them in their social contexts, they now demonstrate eagerness to help other people achieve them too. In a way, this contrasts with the manner in which some of them have depicted their personal school experiences as unsuccessful or insignificant. In the future they envisage, they would provide more meaningful learning experiences to their students.

Other career plans involved dealing with the written world: "eu quero ser escritor (...), eu entrei com isso na cabeça [uhum], que é o que eu sempre quis" (João, narrative). Ana Rieger and Bruna also dreamed of becoming ~~a~~ writers. In her narrative, Bruna told that: "eu brincava (...) quando eu era criança, de que – eu ficava numa mesinha, aí eu colocava pilhas, assim, de livros dos meus pais, (...) aí ela chegava, eu dizia assim 'ah, pra quem que eu dedico isso?' [risos] (…), um dia isso vai se tornar realidade" (Bruna, narrative). What attracted her to writing was the freedom that such activity promised: "eu... poderia escrever onde eu quisesse, sobre o que eu quisesse, a respeito do que eu quisesse... e ninguém podia – poderia me julgar, assim, falando 'ah, não, Bruna, você

tá fazendo o trabalho errado'". Bruna thus imagines that, as a writer, she will gain independence and license to be like herself.

Still concerning writing, Drake, Eduardo, Virgínia and Yumi demonstrated interest in becoming translators. Some of them were already considering graduate studies in the area. Eduardo, in particular, would like to become an interpreter and envisages to work abroad. Yumi also shared the dream of working physically close to books: "desde que eu pensei em fazer inglês aqui, eu pensei na tradução, em focar na tradução de livros [aham], mas eu sempre quis trabalhar em livraria [hum], eu sempre quis fazer alguma coisa pra ficar perto de livros (risos)" (Yumi, narrative). Other participants were not certain about which career to follow, like Daiana or Alice: "eu também penso, ai, de quem sabe não morar aqui, então trabalhar fora, daí trabalhar com o inglês fora [uhum], tipo, ah, vou trabalhar numa editora lá, vou trabalhar dando aula lá, entendeu? [uhum] Então é isso que eu – é, nas minhas fantasias né, eu não sei se isso vai acontecer" (Alice, narrative).

While some participants had a vague imagination of their professional selves, many of them nurtured dreams of traveling and living abroad: Yumi was planning to apply to an American university; Jade was looking for an exchange program in South Korea, where she would like to live in the future: "eu tenho muita vontade de ir mesmo, de trabalhar na Coreia do Sul [uhum], com inglês e com o coreano, assim [uhum], quando eu – se eu aprender"; Eduardo and Bernardo were looking forward to go back to the U.S. and to Ireland; Ana Rieger was preparing her dream trip to Canada; and many participants expressed the desire to get to know the world in general:

> "a ideia mesmo, assim, em algum ponto fazer meio que um mochilão, assim [uhum], **ir pra um monte de lugares**" (Virgínia, narrative)
>
> "na real, se eu pudesse, eu **viajaria o mundo inteiro**, assim" (Bruna, narrative)
>
> "eu tenho vontade de viajar pra vários lugares, assim [uhum], de **trabalhar em vários lugares**" (Jade, narrative).
>
> "when I went to Europe, (…) I realized that **I wanted to know everything and everyone**" (Bianca Inácio, narrative).

Such imagination of a cosmopolitan experience is propelled by English learning, which, as discussed before, carry for many students the promise of a global citizenship, provided that they find the social and economic conditions to go abroad.

According to Pavlenko (2003), the identitary function of imagination is an important aspect in the trajectory of language learners because it allows the appropriation of imagined identities that can transform peripheral membership into legitimate participation, bearing in mind that such imagined identities can be "every bit as real as those imposed by society" (Kramsch, 2009, p. 17). So the participants in this study, in imagining themselves as English teachers, writers, exchange students, translators, global travelers, etc., guide their actions as English language users towards the achievement of such participation – which is not in every case connected to particular target cultures of English, but also to their own local society and to a more outspread community of international English users.

4.2.3.3. Identities in process

If we see identity, in the scope of language learning, as a contingent process that involves "dialectic relations between learners and the various worlds and experiences they inhabit and which act on them" (Ricento, 2005, p. 895), we can understand that the worlds of English described and frequently inhabited by participants in this study, physically and virtually, help shape the way they see themselves and relate themselves to the world around. In fact, in their own words, students described how English has been incorporated into their selves, to the extent that they often find themselves thinking or speaking in English without noticing it. The following excerpts illustrate this:

> "eu **tenho, tipo, pensamentos bilíngues**, assim (risos) (...), falando sozinha, ou então cantando, essas coisas, assim [uhum], mas, geralmente, é falando sozinha, pensando [sim] em inglês, (...) sem perceber" (Jade, narrative)

> "geralmente, às vezes, eu penso em inglês, **eu acho que eu penso mais em inglês do que em português** (risos)" (Drake, narrative)

> "às vezes eu tô pensando sozinha, e **quando eu vejo eu tô pensando em inglês**, aí eu 'nossa, meio estranho' (risos)" (Alice, narrative).

Even Bernardo, who had recently started learning English, came to realize he is going through this process of incorporating English to his speech:

> "uns amigos (...) jantaram em casa [aham], eu não – eu não conseguia dizer a palavra em português que eu queria dizer, tive que dizer em inglês [hum], *lighthouse*, eu queria dizer farol e não conseguia! (...) eles - eles riram de mim, né? 'hahaha, o pretencioso' [risos], mas não é, **sabe o que que é que não vinha a palavra, saca? (...) aí eu pensei 'nossa, o que que tá acontecendo aqui?**'" (Ricardo, narrative).

In addition, students were asked to tell how they felt their life would be if they did not speak or learn English. Such question helped them reflect on how their practices and experiences in English cannot be singled out from their linguistic and cultural repertoire and are therefore an integral part of their bilingual selves (Kanno, 2003):

> "oh my god [laugh], I- I feel like (laughs) I would be a completely different person, 'cause, come on, I'm studying this, and… I am… working with this, and (…) even when I am at home, I feel like I – that's all I do, you know? (...) **I feel like I would be someone that I wouldn't recognize now** (laughs), so yeah, I- I can't even… [imagine] imagine" (Bianca, narrative).

> "nossa, eu nem – **eu não consigo imaginar como que seria**, porque, como eu falei, assim, sempre teve comigo, então é difícil" (Drake, narrative).

> "**eu acho que eu não ia ser eu**, sabe? Eu já me identifico tanto com o inglês, com falar inglês, (...) então ia ser bem diferente, eu acho (Alice, narrative).

> "ah, **eu seria bem triste** (...), especialmente com amigos, e... coisas de fã, assim, imagina, eu não ia ter nada disso na minha vida, (...) **não ia ter escapismo nenhum**, ia ter só a vida (risos) (...), 'tá,

> tô triste, vou continuar triste, porque não tem nada pra ler, não tem ninguém pra falar' (risos) [risos], tipo assim'" (Ana Rieger, narrative).

> "**totalmente diferente** (...)**, os meus pensamentos, minhas intenções** [uhum]**, a minha rotina... tudo!** (...) quase tudo, seria como antes de... março porque antes a minha perspectiva era... 'ah, vou relaxar, curtir a vida ainda, ir à praia, correr, passear... [uhum] curtir o meu... meu neto que vai nascer', só isso só, entendeu? (...) Agora não, agora tenho planos [uhum], ou, pelo menos, eu sei que – que vai acontecer coisas, que em algum momento podem acontecer" (Bernardo, narrative).

In the excerpt above, Bernardo makes reference to his trip to Ireland, that took place in March, considering this a turning point in his life. He goes on to say that "aprender inglês pra mim não é só... aprender a ler e falar inglês, né, é esse contexto [uhum], e nesse sentido... a – aprender inglês agora, pra mim, é começar uma vida nova" (Bernardo, narrative). In this sense, for Bernardo, and for many language learners, the desire attributed to language learning is the need for a language "that is not only an instrumental means of communication, or a means of identification with some native speaker, but a way of generating an identity for themselves" (Kramsch, 2009, p. 15) and of finding personal significance in it.

Finally, to conclude this chapter, I draw on Bernardo's narrative, which was very significant not only in terms of this research, but also in terms of the self-reflections that it brought to him. Making an analogy with Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* and the famous episode of the madeleine, Bernardo spoke of the personal memories he was reviving during our conversation:

> "o livro do Proust começa com ele... adulto, ele vai na casa da tia dele... (...) ela serve um chá pra ele, com uma bolachinha, de maisena [uhum], *madeleine*... e quando ele põe aquele – aquela bolachinha na boca e toma o chá, ele retorna pra infância, naquele exato momento ele retorna pra infância, (...) e ele volta no tempo, ele achou essas memórias, e eu – e eu... eu hoje comecei a achar memórias que eu não tinha, eu acho que era a memória... Proustiana que – eu comecei a lembrar (…)" (Bernardo, narrative).

In looking back into his past with some self-criticism, he realized, for instance, that the discrimination he felt against some people around him who spoke English during his youth was quite unreasonable. He also felt that he lost time refusing to learn the language for so long. By narrating his life, Bernardo was then able to better understand and analyze his past experiences and to feel more self-confident to exercise his agency as an English language user. Besides, he was constructing awareness of the benefits of becoming multilingual, in the sense that the personal relationship with a new language can be a site for transformation (Coffey & Street, 2008). In his own words, as he was commenting on differences found in English and Portuguese, Bernardo said: "eu acho que essas diferenças assim, que eu acho que deve ter outras [uhum], eu acho que vai provocar um... um certo revertério aqui", pointing to his expanding mind.

As for the meanings of *speaking English* to participants, based on their performances and desires for the future, I finally endorse Mastrella (2007)'s argument that, beyond what it signifies to each of them in terms of personal growth, speaking English can also represent the possibility of participating more democratically and effectively in the intercultural communities of the world, resonating their own voices and producing their own senses in that language.

CHAPTER V
FINAL REMARKS

Having discussed several themes that arose from the students' narratives in the previous chapter, I will now draw a few conclusions. It is important to bear in mind that these conclusions – based on a particular point in time when the interviews were conducted – should not be seen as definite, for identity, within a narrative perspective, is understood as movement and is therefore always unfinished. As new and unexpected events take place in the participants' lives, their life stories and points of view can be in constant revision.

5.1. CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this study was to investigate the meanings and values attributed to English by a group of students entering the English Language and Literature undergraduate program at UFSC, their cultural identification with the language and the ways in which they construct their identities as English speakers. Here, I attempt to answer the three research questions proposed in the study.

5.1.1. What are the meanings and values that English carry for the participants?

In order to answer this question, I recap that English learning was – in most cases – a socially encouraged activity, also propelled by students' curiosity to understand cultural products in English, by their desire to have new life experiences, and by societal pressure. With few exceptions, the experiences with English learning and use were quite positive and promising, what led participants to cultivate a strong affection for the language. Such reported experiences were mostly related to autonomous, informal experiences, particularly online – although formal learning practices were also considered significant, especially those in the language school setting. As for their understandings of language, participants linked it mostly to communication. Some of them also attached it to culture (agreeing that language is the key repository of

cultural values and meanings [Hall, 1997]), to political practice (for language is a locus of social organization and a form of symbolic capital [Bourdieu, 1991]), and to identity (in recognition that language is the place where our subjectivity is constructed [Norton Pierce, 1995]).

Having this is mind, the general representations brought by the participants concerning English was that of 1) a *universal language* that is spoken anywhere, emphasizing communication with people from the expanding circle countries; 2) the *most important language* of all, an understanding that is reinforced by the great exposure they had to English in their everyday lives; 3) a *language of domination*, stressed by Bernardo and Chokolatchy Kentchy and contrasted with the possibility of using English as a form of resistance or counterpower; 4) a *necessary language* to be part of society, at both the professional and personal levels; 5) the *language of opportunities*, a common representation that is related to the previous one and that, as a consequence, leads to its representation as 6) the *language of exclusion*, as suggested by some students when arguing that English becomes positive only for those who are able to learn and master it – that is, a minority in Brazil; 7) *a language that gives access to other cultures*, for English was depicted by some as a way to reach other cultural products and languages, particularly from the East, facilitated by electronic media; and 8) a *language of access to other discourses about the world*, what makes it possible to develop a better sense of things around. Some of these representations seemed to be nurtured by the speech of other people around the participants, which they have assimilated for themselves, while others seemed to be based on their own experiences with the language.

Along with these representations and underlying meanings, participants also described some of the material and symbolic values that English brings (or promises) to them – and which are closely connected to their personal investments in the language. Such values reinforce that, more than a linguistic system, English is, for the participants, a product of the will to certain goods and identities (Pennycook, 2006). These included: 1) *finding better job opportunities* and *succeeding in life*, values that are related to power and social recognition, and that, in the case of this set of students, have more to do with realization than to financial capital; 2) a *promise of traveling and global citizenship*, for English facilitates the communication with the world and the development of a cosmopolitan self that allows the participants to explore diverse imagined identities; 3) *access to knowledge and entertainment produced around the world* and 4) *a way to get information in first hand*, particularly online, as English is considered the language of the internet; 5) a *feeling of being*

more connected to the world than those who cannot speak it; and, in this direction, 6) a sense of *singularity*, for English was for several participants a new mode of expression that distinguished them from other people around them; likewise, 7) *social recognition*, linked to the positive feeling of being able to help people out with English; 8) *freedom* and *new life experiences*, attached to the promise of discovering new worlds; 9) *personal improvement*, related to the possibility of speaking and behaving in ways that are different than their usual modes, and which are often more positive; and, connected to this, 10) the possibility of *rethinking values and practices* and of 11) *better understanding oneself*, what illustrates that learning – English, in this case – is for the participants "not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming" (Wenger, 1998, p. 215).

As suggested earlier, these results indicate that English took for the participants a symbolic value much higher than its economic or instrumental worth, and that, by investing in English learning, they are enhancing their cultural capital, their identity and their desires for the future.

5.1.2. How are English-related cultures represented by participants and in what ways do they identify with them?

This second research question understands that the way students activate their (de)identifications with the language informs their identity constructions (Jordão, 2014). As observed before, English was somehow part of the participants' cultures and identities since they were children – as the language was around them on TV, on the radio, in advertisements, etc., to the extent that contact with English was practically inevitable. Still, representations of English were mostly attached to the foreign world and to the culture(s) of "others", apart from their local environment, even though they identified themselves with part of these cultures in various degrees.

Overall, the understandings of culture implied in the narratives were connected to (1) *ways of thinking and viewing the world*, (2) *ways of behaving* or *societal norms*, and (3) *dynamic practices*, which can be transformed by the way people create different meanings and perform with language. As for the cultural images they associated to English, these were often related to symbols (e.g. White House, English tea, the queen) and practices (e.g. Thanksgiving Day, pop music, politics) particularly

from the U.S. and the U.K.. Hence, although they emphasized the relevance of English to communicate with people from the expanding circle, suggesting a detachment of English language from the center (or inner circle countries), when it came to culture, the majority of them represented it as belonging to the inner circle. This happened, as suggested earlier, because students have frequent access to products from these countries and because their formal and informal learning experiences were usually targeted at the hegemonic cultures of English, often reducing them to stereotypical national attributes. Still, several participants showed awareness that such stereotypes may not be real and that cultures are rather plural.

In what comes to their personal identification with the represented cultures, several of the participants identified with American popular culture and/or nurtured an admiration for aspects of the British culture – in both cases by influence of the movies, literature and the media in general, in addition to their own social experiences. This identification was often associated to the desire of becoming members of a certain imagined community (Daiana, for example, felt that she could symbolically connect herself to British culture by drinking tea), what shows that in many cases English was not seen as pertaining to their current, tangible communities, but rather allowed them to expand their cultural identities as English speakers. It is also worth pointing out that the personal attachment to English did not mean in all cases an identification or a desire to belong to specific English-speaking national cultures, like in Josh's case. Also, the identification with English did not diminish many of the students' sense of affiliation to their own local cultures, which were coexisting with their imagined communities and appreciated by several of them. Hence, in identifying themselves with more than one language and more than one culture, students were developing awareness to multiple ways of being and doing that enabled the construction of new identities (Coffey & Street, 2008).

5.5.3. How do participants position themselves as English speakers in the world?

In order to answer this third research question, I take into account the students' participation in English-speaking communities, their self-perception and performance as English language users, and their desired identities for the future.

Regarding their participation in English-speaking communities, students associated themselves to a number of different social groups in which they could make use of English in both face-to-face (e.g. language school, network of friends) and virtual environments (e.g. multiplayer online games, fan forum, fanfic community). Some of them also expressed the desire to associate to less tangible groups (e.g. an English-speaking nationhood), consisting therefore in imagined communities. Within the various memberships, participation in virtual communities was particularly notable, as the virtual world seemed to be a significant part of students' everyday lives. Exploring this world by themselves and according to their own interests, the majority of students narrated positive online experiences, which allowed for the interaction with people from all around the globe and the development of new and multiple identities for themselves (e.g. Ana Rieger as a fanfic writer and Daiana as a forum moderator) which extended beyond geographic borders. So although the majority of representations of English and related cultures discussed before were connected to the hegemonic English-speaking nations, participants' reported membership experiences, particularly online, signaled the possibility of understanding language as not specifically tied to particular ethnicities or territories (Pennycook, 2004) and of perceiving identity in a more cross-border and changeable way.

Despite their participation in a number of English-speaking communities, the way participants conceived themselves as English speakers varied. Although the majority could see themselves as such, some of them could not or were not sure about it, mostly because they were afraid of speaking and making mistakes, what would characterize them as "illegitimate speakers" before the native, "legitimate" ones (a possible consequence of being seen as non-native speakers in the cultural system in which they are embedded). In fact, many participants placed a high value on native-like ways of speaking and some of them nurtured the desire of speaking like a native. They did, however, based on their previous experiences with the language, express recognition of the existence of different varieties of English, rejecting the idea that there is one single way of speaking. Furthermore, some of the participants recognized the value of personal accents and sought the validation of their performance in terms of communicative success instead of complying to a standard model. In this sense, although most of them seemed to be placing themselves in the periphery of the English-speaking community, some students signaled that they were constructing themselves as *legitimate English users* rather than as *failed native speakers* (Pavlenko, 2003). Here, I recap the observation made earlier that as interactions

online are becoming more and more usual, terms such as language "user" instead of language "speaker" would be a more appropriate and encompassing term for all communicative forms.

In terms of the participants' performances in English, as discussed before and considering the various practices described in the narratives – such as teaching, writing, translating and interacting online –, students appeared to be developing themselves as legitimate users of English, even when their representations about themselves differ. Among the practices, the internet was a significant space for students, as they could exercise their agency in a number of virtual environments and start building up new identities for themselves. As for their imagined futures, the teaching career was highlighted by many participants. Recognizing the material and symbolic values English has brought (or promises to bring) to them, several students demonstrated eagerness to help other people achieve them too – in a way that contrasts with some of their previous experiences as students. Other career plans, mostly writing and translating, were pointed out, and many participants also nurtured the dreams of traveling and living abroad, be it in the United States or in South Korea, for example.

The role of imagination, that was characteristic in the students' narratives, is, according to Pavlenko (2003), an important aspect in the trajectory of language learners because it allows the appropriation of imagined identities that can transform peripheral membership into legitimate participation. So in imagining themselves as English teachers, writers, exchange students, translators, global travelers, etc., participants were guiding their current actions towards the achievement of such participation – which, as suggested before, is not necessarily connected to particular target cultures of English, but also to their own local society and to a more outspread community of international English users.

Finally, in their narratives, students showed awareness of the incorporation of English into their selves and could reflect on how their practices and experiences in English were an integral part of their identities. From the analysis, it was possible to conclude that the desire attributed to language learning did not concern only the ability to communicate, the acquisition of material or symbolic resources, or the sense of belonging to a target community, but the possibility of exercising their agency as language users in global and local sites and of generating new, positive identities for themselves.

5.2. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

As Mastrella (2007) observes, speaking a language involves more than describing realities: it is a constant producing, making and operating over them (p. 301). Because of its special position in the globe and its valorization as a symbolic good in Brazilian society, speaking English also denotes the engagement in practices that produce more valued identities – identities that can provide individuals with access to a wider range of resources and social positions (Mastrella, 2007, p. 302). Hence, when it comes to the language classroom, it is important to bear in mind that learners carry with them a large number of experiences and desires and that they may use language for various reasons rather than only to communicate with other speakers.

Providing opportunities for learners to reflect about the social identities available to them is important, and producing narratives might be a fertile ground for that. It is likewise significant that English teachers become aware of students' real/imagined identities, so as to construct meaningful learning activities in which students can invest and which may provide them with further identity options and cultural models, for "classroom discourses play an important role in shaping students' memberships in imagined communities and legitimizing new identity options" (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 266).

As I have mentioned before, the term *English as an Additional Language*, which is gaining popularity in Brazil, describes a language that may be used to express students' own cultures instead of belonging to the others. The results of this study indicated, however, that this understanding did not reflect the students' views in general, as several of them did not consider themselves legitimate speakers of English yet – although their actual practices suggested that they were already performing as such, both locally and globally. Based on that, and bearing in mind that this might be the reality of many other students in Brazil, it is important that the language classroom brings forth "the cultural relocation of English that is taking place in the real world, a relocation from Anglo-American cultures to global and local ones" (Saraceni, 2009, p. 184), moving towards a decolonized EAL teaching practice. I believe this should include the attention to other English-speaking voices from less known cultures, showing learners that English is found in the poetry of the Caribbean or in the music of African countries, for example, and that new forms of English arise from these places, with which they may also identify.

In addition, the students' intense contact with virtual communities and their interest for multiple cultures and languages, as expressed in many of the narratives, also indicate the need for "a broad and critical conception of language and literacy that is responsive to students' relations to multiple target languages and cultural communities" (Lam, 2008, p. 478). When the English language classroom is able to explore linguistic and cultural diversity, students have the opportunity to challenge and expand their notion of standard English and of major cultural models, helping them to become intercultural English users[7] and to accept themselves as legitimate members of the global English-speaking community. If possible, the internet may also be explored in the EAL teaching as a creative forum for constructing solidarity through language (Lam, 2008).

In teacher education, within the same perspective, professors can help non-native student-teachers generate a new sense of professional agency and legitimacy (Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, 1999). This could be done by exposing them to debates on the native/non-native speaker dichotomy and on contemporary theories of multilingualism and interculturality (e.g. Kramsch [2009]; Kumaravadivelu [2008]; Liddicoat & Sacarino [2013]). By understanding English as belonging to diversity, preservice teachers can work on this together with their future students through classroom activities so that they can empower themselves as English language users.

Moreover, since informal learning experiences are often overcoming school experiences in terms of personal significance to students, teacher education is urged to cope with the fact that the English

[7] the intercultural language user can be someone: "a) who is always learning how to use language in context and tries to grasp the visible and invisible cultural aspects of the languages he/she uses; b) can understand that some linguistic structures and words are part of a cultural way of seeing and acting upon the world and that our perceptions of our own language and culture determine, in part, our perceptions of ourselves and of how we see the others, that is, that there are some linguistically and culturally influenced ways to see the world; c) is able to understand that meaning is culturally (or discursively) constructed and that different groups of people have different norms and expectations in communicative situations; d) develops attitudes of acceptance of differences, avoiding stereotypes and prejudices, that is, avoids having an essentialist view of culture and language; e) has a critical stance in relation to issues of linguistic and cultural power and hegemony and problematize essentialist cultural representations; and f) is confident to use language in a creative way and understands the creative and symbolic power of it" (Gil et al., 2017, p. 6-7).

classroom no longer limits itself to its physical space: rather, it should invest in recognizing and interacting with the spontaneous, multiliterate and multicultural practices that may be inhabiting learners' lives or that could be otherwise encouraged, in the attempt to make regular English classes – particularly public schools ones – more effective and meaningful.

In this sense, I understand – and this I say based on the present study results and on my own experience as an undergraduate student – that the curricula of English Language undergraduate programs in Brazil could invest more actively in incorporating such challenges and debates, whether through the proposal of specific courses or through cross-disciplinary practices, so as to contribute for these transformations to take place.

5.3. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As this investigation was centered on a particular group of students located in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, I would suggest that similar studies with other groups of students in Brazil are carried out in order to raise new experiences and perspectives about the topic. It would also be valuable to conduct long-term studies that are able to keep track of students' changing identity constructions and representations through time (e.g. interviewing them in more than one year). In addition to focusing on undergraduate students that have chosen to study English, it would be relevant to carry out more studies on the representations and feelings of school students towards English, in a setting where mixed feelings are usually found, and with an eye on whether and how the increasing contact with the virtual world is changing students' perspectives and practices in English. In this sense, I would also recommend the development of case studies to investigate how Brazilian students are performing and creating voices in English online (or elsewhere). Finally, as for the implications regarding the university programs, it would be of relevance to carry out investigations on English undergraduate programs' curricula in Brazil (possibly in comparison to other countries) with a view to analyzing the ways in which they address – or not – the issues of culture, identity and language learning discussed here.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Consent form

TERMO DE CONSENTIMENTO LIVRE E ESCLARECIDO

Olá, você está sendo convidado(a) a participar da pesquisa intitulada **"'The Englishes in me": Investigando as percepções de aprendizes de inglês como língua adicional, cultura e identidade**", que está sob responsabilidade da pesquisadora Profª. Drª. Gloria Gil e da pesquisadora assistente Paula Eduarda Michels.

Esta pesquisa está associada ao projeto de mestrado de Paula Eduarda Michels, do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários da UFSC, e tem por objetivo investigar as percepções de estudantes ingressantes no curso de graduação em Letras – Inglês em relação à língua inglesa e sua influência na construção da identidade destes estudantes.

Sua participação consistirá na realização de uma entrevista individual, conduzida em português ou inglês, a critério do(a) participante, em data e horário a combinar, na qual você irá falar sobre suas experiências com a língua inglesa e suas motivações para aprender inglês. A entrevista será gravada em áudio para que as informações possam ser examinadas posteriormente pelas pesquisadoras.

Na pesquisa qualitativa, habitualmente, não existem grandes riscos para o(a) participante. Entretanto, você poderá sentir desconforto em compartilhar informações pessoais ou falar sobre algum tópico que lhe cause incômodo. Portanto, deixamos claro que você não precisará responder a qualquer pergunta ou compartilhar informações caso as considere de ordem pessoal ou sinta qualquer desconforto ou constrangimento em falar. Caso você venha a sentir algo dentro desses padrões, comunique à pesquisadora. Abandonaremos imediatamente o uso de qualquer informação que seja avaliada pelo(a) participante como imprópria.

Esclarecemos, ainda, que as pesquisadoras serão as únicas a ter acesso aos dados da entrevista e tomarão todas as providências necessárias para manter o sigilo das informações. No entanto, como em toda pesquisa, existe a possibilidade remota da quebra do sigilo involuntária e não intencional (causada, por exemplo, por perda ou roubo de documentos ou equimentos). Neste caso, as consequências da quebra de sigilo serão tratadas nos termos da lei.

Assim, manteremos em anonimato, durante e após o término do estudo, todos os dados que possam identificá-lo(a) na pesquisa. Os resultados deste trabalho poderão ser apresentados em encontros ou revistas científicas, sem revelar seu nome ou qualquer informação relacionada à sua privacidade.

Apesar de não haver garantia de benefícios diretos aos participantes, a sua participação nessa pesquisa é de grande valor, pois com ela buscaremos compreender melhor os sujeitos que ingressam no curso de Letras Inglês – futuros professores e/ou profissionais de língua inglesa, e contribuir para a qualificação de docentes que desejam incorporar as experiências culturais de seus estudantes em sala de aula.

Esclarecemos que sua participação é voluntária, sendo que a legislação brasileira não permite compensação financeira pela participação em pesquisa. No entanto, caso ocorra alguma despesa extraordinária associada à pesquisa, você poderá ser rescarcido(a) nos termos da lei. Igualmente, caso você tenha algum prejuízo material ou imaterial em decorrência da sua participação, poderá solicitar indenização de acordo com a legislação vigente.

Você terá plena liberdade de recursar-se a participar ou retirar seu consentimento em qualquer momento da pesquisa, sem necessidade de apresentar justificativa e sem sofrer nenhuma penalização.

Ao término da pesquisa, você será informado(a) sobre as publicações decorrentes dela e terá acesso aos resultado da dissertação, que deverá ser finalizada no primeiro semestre de 2018.

A pesquisadora responsável compromete-se a conduzir a pesquisa de acordo com o que preconiza a Resolução CNS 466/12 de 12/06/2012 e a Resolução CNS 510/16 de 07/04/2016, que tratam dos preceitos éticos e da proteção aos participantes de pesquisa.

Em caso de dúvidas e esclarecimentos, você poderá entrar em contato a qualquer momento com as pesquisadoras por meio dos contatos fornecidos abaixo.

Profª. Drª. Gloria Gil Telefone: (48) 3721-9288 E-mail: glorigil@gmail.com Endereço Profissional: Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Centro de Comunicação e Expressão, Departamento de Língua e Literatura Estrangeiras. Campus Universitário UFSC - Trindade – Florianópolis/SC – CEP: 88040-900	**Paula Eduarda Michels** Telefone: (48) 9909-3460 E-mail: paulamichels.trad@gmail.com Endereço Residencial: R. Douglas Seabra Levier, 163, bloco A, apto. 504 – Bairro: Carvoeira – Florianópolis/SC – CEP: 88040-410

Você também poderá entrar em contato com o **Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa com Seres Humanos (CEPSH)** da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina pelo telefone: (48) 3721-6094, e-mail: cesp.propesq@contato.ufsc.br, ou pessoalmente no seguinte endereço: Prédio Reitoria II, R: Desembargador Vitor Lima, nº 222, sala 401, Trindade, Florianópolis/SC.

Este documento foi elaborado em duas vias. Todas as páginas deverão ser rubricadas e assinadas por você e pela pesquisadora responsável. Guarde cuidadosamente a sua via, pois este documento traz importantes informações de contato e garante os seus direitos como participante da pesquisa.

Termo de Consentimento Livre e Esclarecido

Eu,
_____
_____, RG _____, li este documento e obtive das pesquisadoras todas as informações que julguei necessárias para me sentir esclarecido(a) e optar por livre e espontânea vontade participar da pesquisa apresentada. Desta forma, assino este termo, juntamente com a pesquisadora responsável, em duas vias de igual teor, ficando uma via sob meu poder e outra em poder das pesquisadoras.

Florianópolis, ____/____/2017.

_____ _____

Assinatura do(a) participante Assinatura da pesquisadora responsável

APPENDIX B – Narrative summaries

The following narrative summaries were sent to each participant of this study in order for them to confirm the information and to participate in the construction of their stories. All 16 participants agreed with the content, which was the result of my interpretation of the interview data.

Narratives are disposed in alphabetical order of the pseudonyms chosen by each participant.

Alice

Alice is a 17-year old girl born in Chapecó, a city in western Santa Catarina. She had just moved to Florianópolis by herself to pursue her undergraduate studies. Alice's story with English starts as a young kid, as she had basic English classes in the small school she went to. At the age of 10, she moved to a bigger school and had a teacher that would only speak English in class. As she was not used to that, she felt a bit left behind because she could not keep up with the classes like her classmates did. At one particular time, the teacher played a trick on her: he hid her eraser and played hot and cold. She could not understand what he was saying, so at that time she realized she would have to learn English, otherwise there were chances she might fail in school. Alice spoke to her mother about this and was immediately encouraged to take English classes at a private language school. After a year in the course, she felt she was already speaking good English.

Alice spent 4 years in this private school. Besides the classes, her contact with English was through movies, songs and literature (fanfics), coming mainly from the United States and England. Therefore she feels her learning came out naturally and gradually. When she turned 15, Alice asked her parents for a birthday trip. As her older sister was doing an exchange in Portugal, she went to visit her and they traveled to France, Germany and England for a couple of weeks. In this experience abroad, Alice did not feel comfortable with speaking to other people in English. She felt shy and was afraid of making mistakes and facing communication

problems. So her sister did most of the talking, but she could understand what people were saying around her and was glad for that.

Alice chose to take English as an undergraduate degree because this is the subject she identifies herself with the most and because of her interest in reading. Besides her initial motivation of learning English for not failing school, Alice has invested in learning English throughout her life because of her desire to travel the world. She sees English as the main language for international communication, believing that everywhere she goes, there will be someone who speaks English.

In the future, Alice would like to work abroad, maybe as a translator – which is her first idea – or possibly as a teacher. Her parents are both lawyers and her sister is graduating in Law, but she did not want to follow her family's path because she finds that profession stressful. Her mother always made her comfortable to choose her own career and she finds much support from her family. After her studies, she considers pursuing a graduate degree in translation.

Still nowadays, Alice considers herself more like an English *reader* than an English *speaker*, because she does not have many opportunities to speak. She has met some exchange students before, with whom she was able to speak, but she finds that in order to achieve a really good fluency one has to live abroad or speak a lot in the language. She would like to speak English one day just like she speaks Portuguese, with sort of a native-like fluency. Alice has also learned French for a short period, mainly because of her mother, who told her once that she would not be allowed to travel if she did not learn a new language. Her mother keeps encouraging Alice to learn additional languages. She wants to continue learning French and start German.

Although she does not consider herself an English speaker yet, Alice suggests she has incorporated English to her life and to her mind. Sometimes she realizes she is thinking to herself in English instead of Portuguese and finds it kind of strange. She is surrounded by English in the stories and books she read, in the music she listens to; she has friends with whom she can discuss things that are in English, and she believes she would be a very different person if she did not know English.

Alice chose to do the interview in Portuguese.

Ana Rieger

Ana Rieger is 21 years old and was born in Florianópolis, where she has been living since then. Her first contact with English was in preschool, where she was taught some basic vocabulary. At the age of 9, she started an English course at a private language school because her grandmother thought it was important that she learned a second language. The school's methodology was based on experience and real life situations, so she felt that language was acquired more naturally. Ana Rieger continued in this school until she was 17. Throughout her life, English has actually been very much linked to her interest for reading and writing. She enjoys reading literature and fantasy in particular, a genre which is more commonly found in English. When she started gaining a perception of English, translations started bothering her and she became curious to read the originals. She also enjoys reading fanfics, and, as the majority of them are written in English, she created the habit of reading in English. Besides this influence from literature, she was also curious to learn about the language itself, like its grammar and usage.

Writing was one of the things Ana Rieger has always enjoyed doing and this made her look for a Journalism degree at first. She took 2 years and a half of Journalism but realized this was not what she was looking for. She did not fit in the program, the career did not attract her and it was discouraging for her writing. She wanted to write fiction and already had the habit of writing in English, so she applied for a degree transfer to the English program and is very pleased with her decision. Ana Rieger did not try English from the start because of her family's influence. Her grandmother, for instance, did not like the idea of her studying it as a career, in spite of having encouraged her to learn English.

Ana Rieger's main interaction with English-speaking people is through a virtual fanfiction community. She likes to write and read stories written by fans around the world, based on series or book characters. Because of these fanfics, she has met and talked to people from abroad, mainly from Canada and the United States, and she made friends with a girl from Toronto, to whom she speaks regularly. When Ana Rieger started writing fanfics and putting them online, she thought "well, nobody is ever going to read it", than she realized that people actually read it and that was very nice. The writers' nationalities are not evident in the community, unless she looks for the person on some social media, but sometimes she can presume a person is from the United States or from England, for example, because of the difference in vocabulary.

Besides the fanfiction community, Ana Rieger also interacts with international people on social media, especially when the topic is ice hockey. This is her favorite sport and she follows some Canadian teams' accounts on Twitter, interacting with them and sometimes with journalists too. In person, Ana Rieger still did not have many speaking opportunities. She feels embarrassed to talk face-to-face to foreign people, because she fears making mistakes and not being able to continue a conversation. As an English speaker, she does not long for speaking like a "native", but rather to gain confidence and be able to communicate successfully. She also seeks to improve her writing skills, to be able to write longer pieces of text.

Ana Rieger is planning to travel to Canada in the near future for an exchange and maybe to do some voluntary work. She chose Canada because of her interest for ice hockey: it is a popular sport there and she is looking forward for watching a live game. Her interest for this sport was influenced by a close friend who enjoyed it and introduced it to her. They are actually planning to do this trip together. Ana Rieger also intends to start learning French, for she finds it is important to know the language if she is going to Canada. With this trip, she seeks to gain confidence in speaking English more freely and to live new things which she cannot live here, such as the weather and the Canadian sport culture, bringing these experiences together with her when she comes back to Brazil. Going abroad is a dream for Ana Rieger and without traveling she feels she is stuck in her surrounding reality (she has been to Disneyland as a teenager, but it was a different experience).

If she did not know English, Ana Rieger thinks she would be a very sad person, because there would be no "escaping", just "regular life". When she has a bad day, she goes after the things that comfort her, which are all English-related, like readings, series, music, and chatting with English-speaking friends. If she did not have that, she would have to look for some other kind of comfort in Portuguese. Besides advantages like reading more without depending on translation and speaking to more people from other nationalities, English has also made Ana Rieger learn about various other things, such as global social issues like feminism, to which she was mostly introduced through this language.

Ana Rieger is currently having her first teaching experience: she is working with kids in the language school she went to as a student. That has been pretty challenging for her, because she has to do research and adapt her knowledge for the children universe, not to mention the difficulty in dealing with them in class. As for the future, Ana Rieger would like to continue teaching, but she intends to pursue a master's and

a doctoral degree and become a University professor. She admires her current literature professor and recently realized this is what she wants to do. And if she finds opportunity for writing and publishing books, that would be great too.

Ana Rieger chose to do the interview in Portuguese.

Bernardo

Bernardo is 53 years old and was born in Montenegro, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. He has been living in Florianópolis for about 5 years, where he works as a civil servant. He lives with his wife and his 16-year-old daughter, and he also has a 33-year-old son from his past marriage and a recent grandson. During his youth, Bernardo never liked English. Actually he felt a great prejudice against it, because, as a left-wing activist, he saw it as the language of domination and imperialism. At school, English classes were bad and unhelpful. He saw that some of his classmates liked the language because they took English courses and had the opportunity to travel abroad. He, on the other hand, could not afford this, as he came from a poor family. His mother was a seamstress and his father was a factory worker. As he imagined he would follow the steps of his father, he actually did not see any purpose in learning English.

Despite this resistance for learning English, Bernardo enjoyed American and British rock music. He had contact with English through the songs he heard on the radio or on TV, and when he listened to these songs, he would get eager to know what the lyrics were about. At that time, things were not so easy, as there was no internet, so he remembers relying on a TV program on Saturday afternoons where they played music videos with subtitles in Portuguese. The reason why he liked these English-speaking bands was because, for him, rock ‘n roll represented defiance against the dominant system. So Bernardo understood that these artists used the English language to fight against the existing power. He saw it as an act of protest even when he did not understand the lyrics (which could in fact be about love or ordinary issues). At that time, Bernardo also enjoyed Brazilian Pop Music (MPB) and regionalist music from Rio Grande do Sul, besides some Latin American protest music, like Peruvian music. Because of such contact with Latin American music and the cultural proximity he had with neighbor countries as a gaucho, he nurtured the desire of learning Spanish.

Bernardo kept this prejudice against English for a long time. Besides being a member of a labor union and of a community association, he was affiliated with the Brazilian labor party (PT) for more than 15 years. He only quit it when he was 32 years old. Throughout this time, he dedicated most of his time to political activism and nurtured a hatred against American and British people. This gradually changed as he altered his political view and started realizing that English could be used in a different way. It was then that he started paying attention to English literature.

Bernardo has always enjoyed reading. One book would lead to another and, after reading Proust and Dostoiévski, he bumped into James Joyce, the first British writer he read and simply fell in love with. Because of this experience with British literature, he felt he should start learning English for once if he were to read some of these works in their original language – for he believes that by reading in the original language, he is able to understand the work better. Some time later, in 2016, when his daughter turned 15, instead of a birthday party, she asked for a trip to Ireland as a gift. The girl liked everything about Ireland, its history, its culture, its music. So Bernardo, his wife and his daughter went for a 10-day trip around Ireland and had an incredible experience there. Bernardo fell in love with the country in general, because of its culture, people and landscape, and had a very special time as he could visit some museums about James Joyce and other related places. This trip has increased Bernardo desire for learning English and he now considers going back to Ireland and maybe living there in the future, after he retires.

It was after the trip to Ireland that Bernardo's wife encouraged him to go back to study and try the English degree: "look", she said, "you are reading British literature and is obsessed with it, you loved Ireland and so did I, then why don't you enter the English Program?". She insisted on it and Bernardo decided to take the university entrance exam (Vestibular) at UFSC. From the beginning, he was not that much motivated to go back to studying, but he passed the exam, and after completing a month of studies, he can say he is already in love with the program, especially because of the literature courses.

English was not the first degree Bernardo has pursued. Since his youth, he started a series of undergraduate programs - Economy, Biology, Sociology and Geography – , but for a number of reasons he never completed any of them. He moved to Santa Catarina in 2008 – he and his wife wanted to live here, so they both sought a position in the public service and managed to come -, and from this time on he never thought about trying another university degree again, despite his wife insistence.

He was almost 50, about to retire, so he just wanted to enjoy life and have some free time. But after the trip to Ireland, something has changed and English came in.

Bernardo did not consider taking a regular language course to learn English, because he wanted to have the literature part which a regular course would not give him. Also, although he is about to retire, he does not discard using the language professionally in the future, maybe with teaching or translation. He is now taking the beginner level of English and feels that he has already made progress. In his everyday life, Bernardo has contact with English through the online newspapers he started reading, especially the Irish ones. He also watches some international TV programs with no subtitles and some videos on YouTube. In this sense, internet has been very useful. Besides his main motivations – be able to read literary works in English and travel to different places –, Bernardo has recently found out a third personal advantage of learning English: comparing a different language with his own and seeing to what extent the latter is conditioning his behavior. He has come to this reflection after having contact with the way gender can be unmarked in English, while in Portuguese we still have to come out with ways of expressing ourselves so as not to favor the male gender in speech.

Bernardo's first opportunity of speaking to people in English was in Ireland. None of the three – he, his wife and his daughter – had a good level of English, but they did not hesitate venturing themselves in foreign land. The daughter was the one who spoke English better, because she was having English classes at school, and his wife also took an English course long ago. Despite his daughter's shyness, she helped them out with translating and understanding things around. They also prepared themselves by going through short "English for tourism" books beforehand, for they felt a bit insecure. Despite his reluctance, Bernardo unexpectedly managed to talk to some people who approached him in two occasions, at two James Joyce museums. They asked about the reception of Joyce's literature in Brazil and if he knew of some Portuguese translations. In both situations, he was able to communicate his ideas. In Brazil, he never talked to foreign people before, except when he had to pick up the phone in his past job at a factory. In these times, he would say "just a moment, please" and pass the phone to the employees in charge of dealing with international clients. He realizes now that if he had learned English before, maybe he would have had better job opportunities in the past. Bernardo has also never interacted with people online. Now he thinks it would be nice if he found some Irish (and patient) person to practice his English and exchange ideas, especially about Irish events.

Besides a genuine admiration for the cultural richness and organization of Ireland, Bernardo feels an identity connection to the Irish people. He relates it to the Brazilian gaucho spirit, that has something of rebelliousness and self-determination. A sort of idealized identity is nurtured by the Rio Grande do Sul gauchos, and he feels that the Irish have that same sort of idealization, which is connected to their mythological history and serves to reinforce their culture and differentiate themselves from others. Bernardo already had some affinity with Ireland before traveling and has started questioning if this affection has something to do with his own identity. He thinks it would be nice to analyze this connection further and believes English can also help him with that.

Before going to Ireland, Bernardo had only been abroad once – to Uruguay. He and his family are already planning another trip to Europe in the next year. They would also like to visit England, Scotland, and Wales. In terms of English-speaking countries, he has no interest to go to New Zealand or Australia, for example, nor to the United States or Canada. Whatever their next traveling plan might be, Ireland will definitely be on it. Later on, he and his wife are thinking about staying a bit longer in the country and maybe doing some studies there. Bernardo is constantly reviving his travel memories and he wants to keep them vivid, because this is motivating him to learn English and he knows this will bring positive things for him.

Bernardo is glad he could finally overcome his prejudice towards English. In fact, looking back into the past, he thinks he was losing time when he refused to learn it. He could have, for instance, understood better some of the events taking place around the world in his youth if he could read English, not to mention the other opportunities he could have seized. Bernardo had some discrimination against people around him who spoke English and now he sees this made no sense. Today he makes some self-criticism and suggests that he was hiding behind his ideology as an excuse for not doing something he was incapable of at the time. This new experience with English is allowing him to make these reflections.

Nowadays, Bernardo is starting to incorporate English into his mind. Recently, some friends came to visit him and in the middle of a conversation there was a word – lighthouse – that he could not remember in Portuguese, only in English. Some time ago he would think people who did that were pretentious, but now he sees from his own experience that it is something different. He feels his life would be very different now if he has not started learning English. A year ago his perspective was simply enjoying his life routine with no surprises, now he has plans, and now

things can happen. In this sense, learning English for him has been like starting a new life.

Bernardo chose to do the interview in Portuguese.

Bianca Inácio

Bianca Inácio is 21 years old and was born in Florianópolis, where she has been living since then. She started learning English around the age of 10, not because her parents found it important, but because of her own desire to learn. Her interest came with the early passion for music and singing. As a kid, Bianca Inácio used to listen to a lot of popular American music and wanted not only to sing along, but to understand the lyrics of the songs. So she asked her parents to take English classes and studied for about an year and a half at a private language school, until her father decided to stop paying for the course, what made her really sad at the time. In spite of that, Bianca Inácio continued learning at home, basically through music, series and movies coming mostly from the United States. She also had English in school, but the classes were not so significant.

At the age of 13, Bianca Inácio already knew a lot of English, mainly because of the time she spent singing. She felt learning English was actually really easy and natural for her, as she did not have to put much effort on it. But although she knew a lot she was still afraid of speaking. At the age of 15 or 16, Bianca Inácio spent a month traveling in Europe with her uncle, and that was when she realized she could actually speak English with people. More than that, she realized she wanted to travel the world and get to know everything and everyone. After this trip, Bianca Inácio decided to go back to the English school she went to, and when she turned 17, she started working and was able to afford the classes. She completed another year and a half of studies and did a test to become an English teacher at the same school. For her surprise, they hired her and at the time of the interview, Bianca Inácio was working as a teacher and feeling in love with the profession.

English language and literature was not Bianca Inácio's first option in terms of undergraduate studies. She studied Technology for 2 years before deciding to quit and switch to English. From the beginning, Bianca Inácio was mainly influenced by her parents to study Technology and was discouraged to follow a teaching career because it was not financially

rewarding. Although it was ok for her, learning Technology was not something that excited her. So, at some point, Bianca Inácio decided to go for something that she really enjoyed studying, regardless of her parents' opinion, and now she believes she is in the right place.

What Bianca Inácio likes about teaching is mainly the possibility to connect with other people: to talk to them and try to understand their lives and dreams. She finds that learning languages and communicating is amazing because you get to understand people who are different from you and to understand a little more about yourself too. In particular, Bianca Inácio sees English as a language that connects everyone and she views her role as that of helping people to achieve that too, since few people are actually able to speak English in Brazil. So she wants to share with others what she has learned and she is getting positive feedback from her current students.

Nowadays, Bianca Inácio feels very comfortable with speaking English. In Florianópolis, she has met several foreign people, like exchange students or tourists, and she usually looks for the chance to talk to them. She also interacts with people online, on social media. However, she feels she has a lot to improve in terms of vocabulary and grammar structures, because her English is very "common" or "TV-like". She would also like to develop her writing skills. Bianca Inácio seeks to understand English just as she understands Portuguese and believes she would really get to improve her skills if she lived in a foreign country, immersed in the language. Ideally, she would like to achieve a British-like accent, but she is ok with her American way of speaking too.

Bianca Inácio tries to use English as much as she can in her everyday life and she feels like she has a different character when she uses English: her voice differs and she is usually happier and wearing a smile all the time. Since English is very much part of her personal and professional life, she cannot imagine herself without it. The things she likes and the things she has decided and started to do are all connected and English is part of that.

Bianca Inácio chose to do the interview in English.

Bruna

Bruna is a 18-year old girl born in Florianópolis. Her first motivation to learn English was related to her early experience with

poetry and songwriting. She had contact with art at an early age due to her family environment. She began writing songs and poems around the age of 6, and, as a kid, she would show her writings to her parents. However, as she started growing up, they gained a more personal and emotional tone and she started feeling uncomfortable to share these writings with her family. Since her parents would eventually find them and read them, Bruna decided to start writing in another language so that people around her would not decipher her poems. She had contact with Spanish and English at school, but Spanish was too similar to Portuguese, so she decided to invest in English.

English classes at school (in both public and private schools) were not much significant to Bruna: teachers would come and go, and she did not learn much from them. She actually learned the language mostly by listening to music and checking the lyrics translation, while trying to speak the same way as the singers. In the beginning, she also got help from her sister, who knew a bit of English, from Google translator and from one of the English teachers she had in 7th grade, who used to have a look at her texts and give some language tips. This teacher in particular was very helpful because he was also a music teacher and would try to teach English through sound and rhythm. Thus, despite some lack of vocabulary, Bruna has endeavored to start writing in English and has continued doing this until then.

Bruna wanted to become many things when she was a kid: singer, actress, composer, writer, etc. Her stronger desire was to become a writer. At home, she would gather books around a table and pretend she had written them in order to give autographs to her mom. When the time for deciding on her career came, Bruna was in doubt on what degree to pursue. She finally decided on language because of her taste for literature, and English in particular because she saw more opportunities in studying a different language instead of Portuguese. But this is not the only career she has in mind. Bruna also considers studying Psychology, Law, Music, and even Naturology. At first, when people would comment about her decision to study Language and Literature and about the undervaluation of teaching, she would argue that she was doing it not to become a teacher, but rather a writer – a career that represents freedom for her. She did not envision a teaching career, in fact, she despised the idea. Later she realized, with the support from her mother, that she could incorporate all the things she liked - music, acting, performing – and her own personality into the English classroom, an idea that sounds good for her now.

Although Bruna prefers to express herself in English when writing, she does not feel confident to consider herself an English speaker. She

never had the opportunity to talk to a foreign person before and is afraid of making mistakes and being judged for that. However, she enjoys her English-speaking self and feels like she assumes a different character when she speaks English, as if she was in a TV series and someone was dubbing her. Her voice tone changes and her behavior is also different. It is as if she could act like a different person.

Bruna has never been abroad, but she would like to know the whole world. She is very curious about going to Ireland, mainly because of its green fields, and also to India, because of its cultural differences. For Bruna, English is very much associated to the American culture, which was part of her childhood's imagery due to the Hollywood movies and other cultural products exported to Brazil. As a kid, it was the influence and the presence of English around her that made her realize that other languages and cultures existed elsewhere, and, later on, that English was spoken in other countries too. Nowadays, although Bruna prefers to write in English, she does put an effort to write poetry in Portuguese too: she may admire the English language and some of its cultural aspects, but she believes it is important to value her own language and culture as well, because they are more part of who she is.

Bruna chose to do the interview in Portuguese.

Chokolatchy Kentchy

Chokolatchy Kentchy is 35 years old and was born in Curitiba, in the state of Paraná. His story with English is one of love and hate. As a teenager, he felt great resistance in learning English: he did not like the language because it brought with it an idea of domination and possible annihilation of other national languages, like Portuguese. A couple of teachers he had in school considerably influenced him to have this view about English. Even so, during the three years of secondary school, he took some extra English classes offered in school because he knew he had to learn English: the job market demanded it. After that, he also took one semester in a private school, on his own initiative, but he did not like the language nor the teaching methodology, so the learning process was not smooth. In the meantime, he also studied Italian for 4 years, a language that was in his family's background and that he enjoyed learning.

After graduating from school, Chokolatchy Kentchy took an undergraduate degree in Tourism and started working for Curitiba's City

Hall. Although he felt his English was very poor, among the people in the tourism office, he was the one who spoke English better. He could communicate with tourists, but even so he felt uncomfortable when speaking. The first time he had to speak English in a more complex situation was in an international business fair in São Paulo, where he had to represent his city. In that occasion, he felt extremely bad because he could not communicate with people properly, what reinforced his distaste for the language.

Then, because of various situations in his life, including the complete frustration with his career in tourism, Chokolatchy Kentchy made a decision of living abroad for some years. He held an Italian citizenship, so it was easy to travel to Europe. His initial plan was to spend two years in England in order to improve his English, and then move to other European countries, possibly Italy and Spain, for he wanted to improve his Italian and Spanish too. However, his plans changed and so did his perspective about English: Chokolatchy Kentchy fell in love with the language and ended up living in London for 7 years. He started realizing that the domination process that he associated with English was not necessarily happening: in some countries that he visited, everyone spoke English but it was not in detriment of their own language, it actually gave them more opportunities. Regarding his learning, he felt that it happened naturally, for he was exposed to English everyday and was paying close attention to it until it became part of his own repertoire.

The change in perception was also driven by the people Chokolatchy Kentchy met in London, particularly a great British friend, who was like a "guardian angel" there since the beginning. He actually met this friend on a dating website before the trip, because he wanted to talk to local people and ask questions about life in London before moving. As his English was progressing, Chokolatchy Kentchy's circle of relations in London moved gradually from all-Brazilians to immigrants in general (especially from southern and eastern Europe), and finally to the local community. In his work life, he also got better positions as his English was improving. During the 7 years he spent abroad, he had various jobs, including very low-paying ones, most of them in hotels. The last one involved answering emails, which made him improve his writing skills.

Then, it was living in England that Chokolatchy Kentchy realized he wanted to become an English teacher. He took a CELTA course in London to obtain a Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages and had the experience of teaching English to other foreigners as part of the course. He enjoyed the experience very much and decided

to pursue a teaching career. That was an important realization for Chokolatchy Kentchy. Back in Brazil, he taught English in some language courses and entered the Master's degree program in English at UFSC. Now he has entered the undergraduate program to improve his teaching skills and obtain a teaching license. Chokolatchy Kentchy's intention is to teach in Brazilian public schools, particularly for secondary school students.

As an English speaker, throughout the years, Chokolatchy Kentchy has changed his perception on the importance of speaking like a native. There was a time when he strived to have a similar pronunciation, for he understood that as closer of a native his pronunciation was, more professional chances would he have abroad. Today he sees that this only leads to frustration and that the issue of preserving one's own accent and identity – which he no longer sees as a negative thing - is much more important. Anyhow, as Chokolatchy Kentchy likes to keep learning, he is constantly seeking to improve his English by searching for new expressions and things online. Today English is very much ingrained in him and he cannot imagined how his life would be if he did not speak it. He would probably not be living in Florianópolis now and everything else would be different.

Chokolatchy Kentchy chose to do the interview in Portuguese.

Daiana

Daiana is 26 years old and was born in Matão, in the countryside of São Paulo, where she has lived her whole life. Her interest for learning English was motivated at first by the Harry Potter series.. When she was about 14, she started reading the books and became a fan of the series. She liked it even more when she watched the Harry Potter movies. They made her admire British English Because Daiana was curious about the language, she searched for a private English course and kept in this course for about 7 years. The language school was like a second home for her. At first, her contact with English was mostly in class, but later she started looking for things by herself, like TV series and online forums, in which she could interact and put her learning into practice.

Daiana has been a member of an anime forum (about Japanese animations and related topics) for 4 or 5 years. Today she is a moderator of this forum, which means she helps organize the discussions and

monitor users' activities. The participants are people from around the world and one of the rules is that all posts must be written in English. This is Daiana's main environment of interaction with English speakers and this virtual experience has boosted her writing skills. There in the forum, she had to learn how to be polite and how to give warnings for the users. She also had the opportunity to speak to foreign people, not only in the open discussions, but also through private messages. By talking to them, she could notice some cultural difference in the way people interact. For example, she thinks British people are less extrovert than us Brazilians and they take some time to trust the other person in a conversation. She also had contact with abbreviated language, which was a little difficult to understand, but she could handle it with some help from her teacher and the internet.

Before going for the English program, four years ago Daiana took a two-year degree in Logistics Technology, but she never worked in the area. For 5 years, she worked in the production section of a metallurgic industry. She wanted to go back to study, but was not sure of which degree to pursue. Because she likes to deal with people, she thought about International Relations, but she still felt insecure. Then, because of her interest for literature and the encouragement of her parents and her English teacher (who, after 7 years together, also became a friend), Daiana chose English, for she identified herself with the language. When she saw the Program's curriculum, she thought "I'm going to fall in love with this program", especially because of the literature part.

When using English, Daiana feels like she has a different personality from the Portuguese-speaking one. In English, she feels she is a bit more "rude", more straight to the point, while in Portuguese things are said in a more "poetic", less objective way. She does not consider herself an English "speaker" yet, as she does not feel confident in speaking and is afraid of making mistakes. In fact, she never had the opportunity of speaking to foreign people in person, just online. She is aware, however, just as her teacher said, that even native people make mistakes. In terms of an ideal, being able to express herself successfully would be enough, but Daiana has the dream of speaking like the actress Meryl Streep, because she admires her accent.

Daiana has never been abroad, but she would love to go to England (London) or Ireland. Ireland because of its "shades of green" and its mystical culture, and England because of the queen, for whom she has a great admiration, and also because of Harry Potter, which has a big influence on her. One of the things she associates with England is tea, and

drinking British tea makes her feel a bit like a British person in imagination.

In Daiana's everyday life, English is mostly present in the anime forum, in music, series, literature and RPG games. Even when she access things from other cultures, like Japanese or Korean pop music, English is there: J-pop and K-pop artists make use of it inside the songs because it is the most spoken language worldwide. Since it is everywhere, Daiana believes her life would be very different without English, especially in terms of access to technology, as the majority of information available is in English. She does not know what she wants to do as a career yet, but she considers working with translation and literature, or maybe with international relations in an NGOs. Daiana sees herself living in Brazil, but she does not discard the idea of working abroad. After all, living close to the British queen would not be a bad idea.

Daiana chose to do the interview in Portuguese.

Débora

Débora is a 20-year old girl born in Vidal Ramos, a small town in the countryside of Santa Catarina. She cannot remember a time in her life when she did not like English. Her impression is that one day she woke up knowing how to speak the language, because her learning process was very natural. She relates her affection with English to a teacher she had in early primary school and later in secondary school. This teacher was an example and inspiration to her and English was her favorite school subject. She used to say she wanted to be an English teacher because of her. Débora's facility for learning was also related to her close contact with music, for she listened to a lot of songs in English, and to the series she liked. She never took any private English language courses.

During school, Débora did not have much opportunity to practice her English, but right after school she participated in the Young Ambassadors program from the U.S. Embassy, targeted at public school students from countries across the Americas. She did not travel to the United States, but she was selected to take part in an immersion week at a language school in Brasilia. During that week, she had classes about history, geography and culture of the United States, all instructed in English, together with other 134 students from across Brazil. This was an amazing experience and Débora sees it as a turning point in her life. Not only was it important for her proficiency in English, but it was also mind-opening for her, because there she had the chance to meet people from

many places in Brazil, with different stories and distinct accents. After this experience, Débora became an "accent lover" – she notices and admires diversity in both English and Portuguese languages.

English was not the first degree Débora wanted to pursue. After graduating in school, she completed a degree in Communication near her hometown, which lasted 2 years and a half. She had plans to study Journalism because she is a very communicative person. However, more recently, as she had the opportunity to teach English, she realized this was what she wanted to do. Her first teaching experience was actually during school, when she and some of her classmates participated in a volunteer project to teach English for young children. Then, two years ago, she returned to her school as a substitute teacher. The permanent teacher was on a health leave and no other teachers were available, so she accepted the challenge. Despite the difficulties faced in the teaching career and in public education, Débora enjoyed the experience. She tried to show students the importance of English nowadays and encouraged them to participate in the Young Ambassadors program, just as she did.

Débora has never traveled abroad. If she could choose anywhere to go, that would be England. She associates her affection to England to one of her favorite series, Doctor Who, and to the Harry Potter books, which were some of the first influences she had from the English-speaking world. Débora still has a lot to learn, but she considers herself an English speaker. In her previous encounters with native speakers, she felt a little afraid of making mistakes, but nowadays she is more confident. In her everyday life, there are certain things which she can communicate better in English than in Portuguese, like when she is talking to her closest friends about personal issues and they feel less shy to express their feelings in English. She also used to keep a diary in English.

Débora cannot separate herself from English, for she sees it as very much part of her personality. Now it is also part of her professional goals. In the undergraduate program, she seeks to obtain more knowledge and return to her hometown to work as a qualified teacher. She wants to show children and teenagers who live in the countryside the opportunities English can bring to their lives, and she wants to be for them what her former teacher was to her, expanding their minds for the big world that is out there. Débora's family also played an important role in her life decisions and on becoming who she is, for her parents are very open-minded and always encouraged her to study, giving the necessary support for her to follow her dreams.

Débora chose to do the interview in Portuguese.

Drake

Drake is 20 years old and was born in Palhoça, a city in greater Florianópolis. English has been part of his life ever since he can remember. As a kid, he used to play videogames and listen to music and was curious to discover what the games or the songs were about. So, with time and on his own, Drake started learning and gaining a good level of English. He never took any language courses – he never felt the need for it –, and classes in school were not very useful, for they only taught the basics. In school, he was actually like a second teacher in class, in the sense that he frequently helped his classmates with English. Drake also did not receive any particular support from his family for learning English, so basically this was something that he learned by himself.

In this process, internet was a major support to Drake**.** It was on the web that he could access the things he liked and all the information he looked for. Most of the entertainment products he enjoyed were released in English, although they not necessarily came from English-speaking countries. It was also on the internet that he got to interact with people from other countries. A couple of years ago, he started going to chat websites where he could speak to strangers from any part of the world. This experience contributed to improving his English and, although he does not use these websites anymore, Drake has made friends to whom he still talks through email or other media. His friends are mostly from the United States and England, but in the chat room he spoke to people of other nationalities too, like India or Japan. Drake recognizes that internet and English allowed him to make these new friends – people that he identified himself with, that happened to be in another country, and that he would not be able to meet otherwise. In the same sense, he feels that internet taught him and showed him other cultures, opening up his mind for different things and new perspectives.

The interaction online was mostly through typing and Drake did not have many opportunities to practice his actual speaking skills. However, with YouTube, he could listen to many people speaking ordinary English and was able to get their accent by listening and imitate them. He also has the habit of thinking and speaking to himself in English as a way of practicing. In person, the first time he met foreign people was in a group conversation that took place recently at UFSC. The group was organized by some American exchange students and there Drake had the chance to exchange some questions and answers in a simple conversation.

He has never been abroad, but he intends to go on exchange in the near future, preferably to Canada or the United States.

Drake is not one hundred percent fluent in English, but he considers himself an English speaker, for he can communicate with people. His ideal as a speaker is to speak well and fluently and basically to be understood. He does not wish to achieve any particular accent or something of the kind. Nor does he see differences among accents in terms of value: as long as they are understandable, this is what matters.

Drake feels a little different when he is speaking English, as if he had a second personality, but he cannot explain why. His voice also differs. Sometimes he feel more comfortable when he assumes that English-speaking personality. He decided to enter the English undergraduate program because English has always been part of his life and learning/using it is something that he wants to keep doing, now in professional terms. In the future, he would like to become a translator, but he may change his mind along the way. Provided that his career is related to English, he believes he is on the right path.

Drake chose to do the interview in Portuguese.

Eduardo

Eduardo is 32 years old and was born in Florianópolis. He learned English mostly by himself, from his experience as a kid watching movies, reading, playing videogames and searching information on the web. He never took any language courses and the classes at school taught him only the basics. Among his friends, he was the one who knew more English, so his classmates liked to have him in their groups whenever there was an assignment. Learning English was kind of accidental for him: he wanted to know more about the things he liked, like movies or videogames, and it was much easier to find information in English than in Portuguese. So English was, at first, a means to an end, a way to have access to information, and by doing this he was gradually improving his language skills.

Eduardo did not decide to pursue the English degree right at first. Prior to English, he studied Information Systems for 2 years – and then quit, because it was driving him crazy – and a year of German – which he also quit for the same reason. During his years as an Information Systems student, Eduardo took part in a Work & Travel program and had a 6-

month experience in Pennsylvania, in the U.S, which was a turning point in his life. This experience strengthened his interest for English and he now sees studying English as a way to keep connected to that world he discovered out there. A world that is very much associated to freedom – where he can do anything and go anywhere, and where people are great and generous.

Different from the friends he met there, Eduardo did not go to the U.S. with the purpose of learning English. As he already spoke good English, he simply went there to try a new experience. He really wanted to do this and was planning this trip for a long time. It could also have been to another English-speaking country, like Canada, the UK, or Australia, but he mainly wanted to go to the U.S., not only because he was more familiar with the American culture, but also because he thought their English was easier to understand and he would not have trouble in communicating. Eduardo worked in a hotel there. Although the work was hard, the experience was amazing, and he wished he could stay longer in the country. He identified with the American culture and, after a few days living there, he could ease himself into it and feel like home. Actually he believes that there are more things over there that has more to do with him – like music, skiing and snow – than in Brazil.

During his exchange, Eduardo made friends with people from other countries, like Argentina or Peru, who were also working in the U.S.. To his Latin American friends, he did not like to speak English because he was afraid they might feel uncomfortable (for they were not very good at it), so he tried speaking Spanish, and this way he learned a bit of this language too. Eduardo did not expect he would have to know Spanish to live in the U.S., not because of his friends, but because many people spoke it there, so he felt a little out of place.

Before the trip, Eduardo did not have many opportunities to interact with people in English. His speaking skills kind of developed naturally, as if in one minute he was silent and the next minute he could speak. In the U.S., people would in fact mistake him for a British person. That happened 3 or 4 times and he does not know why, maybe it was because of his appearance. Eduardo did not feel bothered nor flattered because of that, he would simply correct them by telling his real nationality. After this experience abroad, his interactions with foreign people were mainly through online videogames and chatting with his international friends. He also worked for some time for an airline company and had to serve customers from abroad a couple of times.

Eduardo feels different when he speaks English, although he is not sure why. It is as if his brain rewires and he gets slightly more daring in

comparison to when he speaks Portuguese. This is something that he realized when living in the U.S., where his ego was a little different and he felt more outgoing, ready to do things that he usually would not do, like approaching a girl at a party. He feels that if he did not speak English, he would be more limited, more incased in a box. Speaking more than one language makes he feel freer, expanded, and with the perspective he has now, he is much better today than back when he did not know much English.

As for his future career, Eduardo would like to try something like translation and simultaneous interpreting. He would also like to return to the U.S. to live and work there. He jokes that maybe the United Nations will hire him as a translator/interpreter, for he has high ambitions.

Eduardo chose to do the interview in English.

Jade

Jade is 18 years old and was born in Santarém, Pará, in Northern Brazil. Before coming to Florianópolis, she lived for 6 years in Sorocaba, São Paulo, with her father. She actually lived another year in Florianópolis before that, with her mother, and now she has returned to the city to study. Jade always had contact with English because her father owned an English school in Santarém and her family is very much connected to English: her father and sister are teachers, and her mother also taught English for a couple of years.

So Jade felt English was everywhere around her. She used to see her father correcting tests, they would discuss teaching methods and he would ask her opinion as a student. They also chatted in English at home, and she had everyday contact with the language through music and movies. She also interacted in English with friends and felt that it was a very practical language to learn, for it was basically everywhere. Jade took English classes since she was a young kid, first at her father's school in Santarém, then at another private language school in Sorocaba, besides the classes she had at regular school. Although her family has experience with English teaching, none of them studied English as a university degree. Her father was graduated in Business, her mother in Law, and her sister in Psychology. So Jade will be the first from the family to pursue an undergraduate degree in the area and she will possibly follow the same teaching career.

Besides this influence from her family, Jade also decided to study English because she likes the language itself, its phonetics, its different accents, the literature, not only of the English language, but of languages in general. She chose English because it is the language she is most familiar with and because it can open doors to learn other languages too. She was actually in doubt between the English degree and a degree in Film Studies, and tried for both. The field of translation also interests her. In addition to English, Jade knows a bit of Korean. She enjoys Korean music and Asian culture in general. She cannot speak Korean, but she knows the alphabet and would really like to learn the language. She is aware that UFSC has a cooperation agreement with a South Korean university, so she may try to go on exchange there in the near future.

Jade has never been abroad, but she would love to travel. Among the English-speaking countries, she would mostly like to visit Canada, New Zealand and Scotland. Canada because it is a cold and peaceful country, New Zealand because of its landscapes, and Scotland because of the Scottish accent. She has a strong interest for accents and likes to notice and analyze them. In terms of her own accent, Jade sees it as very "normal", American-like, from the type that is usually taught in Brazil. She would like to get a different accent and believes this can happen if she goes to one of those places, because she usually gets accents easily. This might come from her own experience with Portuguese: while she moved across regions in Brazil she met different people and experienced different accents.

Besides the interaction with some foreign people Jade has met in person and online (she is friends with a girl from South Korea, for example), she also uses English spontaneously when chatting with her Brazilian friends and when talking to herself. In writing, she likes to express her thoughts in the form of songs and she prefers to do it in English because words rhyme better for her in English. Something in Jade's personality also changes when she speaks English. She considers herself a shy person and, despite her insecurity in speaking, she feels less shy and more open to express her thoughts in English.

For Jade, learning another language can broaden people's minds and their knowledge about the world, because language allows the learning of a culture that is different from ours. She recognizes that there is no single culture of English because of its spreading across the world. In the future, she would like to live abroad going to different countries and working in different places. Besides the English-speaking countries, Jade would also like to work in South Korea, with something related to English and Korean languages – she does not know what yet. In the near

future, she intends to work as a teacher at some language school. Although she does not feel secure to go to the classroom yet, with some training she thinks it will be fine.

Jade chose to do the interview in Portuguese.

João

João is 18 years old and was born in the countryside of São Paulo. He has just moved to Florianópolis to pursue his undergraduate studies. João's story with English starts at the age of 11, when he asked his father to take English classes because he was interested in doing an American high school exchange. He took a private course for about 3 years and learned the language quite fast, also due to his contact with music and series. The desired exchange did not work out, but he now considers doing it as a university student and is really looking forward to that.

Although traveling was his first motivation to learn English, soon João became fond of the language itself. He loves reading and writing and this was the main reason why he chose the English program. He writes very well in Portuguese and now he is trying to write in English too. João keeps a sort of a diary to himself and also likes to try out prose. His desire is to become a professional writer and he sees that in Brazil people do not have the habit to read much, so it is important for him to write in English if he wants to reach an international audience. A writer is what he always wanted to be and his family supports him in this direction.

João understands and writes English better than he speaks, but he considers himself an English speaker. He did not have many opportunities to talk to foreign people in person yet – and he felt a bit insecure when he did. He downloaded an app to chat in English once and, although he only used it for a short period, it was a nice experience. He met a girl from the United States, to whom he got to talk for a while, and now they follow each other on social media. João's goal is to speak like a native someday, in the sense of having as much cultural background and lexical mastery as possible. However, he does not associate this ideal native-like proficiency to one specific country.

For his future academic exchange, João would like go to any English-speaking country where there is a place available. He would specially go to the United States or to Canada. Australia would also be nice. His first interest to go to the United States, as a 11 year-old kid, was

related to the appreciation of American culture, which was familiar to him and to us Brazilians in general.

João feels different when he speaks Portuguese and when he speaks English, as if he was two different persons. He cannot explain what it is that changes, but he can feel it. He would say he probably likes the English-speaking one better. Today, João practically thinks in English and is sure that his life would be very different if he did not know this language, in terms of who he is and of the opportunities English can bring in the globalized world.

João chose to do the interview in Portuguese.

Josh

Josh is 19 years old and was born in São José, a city in greater Florianópolis. He has moved with his parents a couple of times and is now living in Palhoça, in the same region. Josh's memories from childhood are fade, but he remembers learning English at an early age because of two main reasons: the songs he listened on MTV, which were all in English and, although he did not like any of them, he could get the meaning of the words kind of naturally because of the number of times he listened to them; and the major reason which was his experience with gaming.

As a "nerdie kid", Josh learned some basic English vocabulary through videogames and at 2nd or 3rd grade he was able to realize that he knew more English than everybody else around him. He remembers telling his classmates that he could not wait to get to 5th grade because then he would have English classes for the first time. He also vaguely remembers being able to talk to his first English teacher in English and, although he cannot say how good he was, he has this conception in mind that he has known English for a really long time.

The impact in Josh's English learning was greater when he started playing Counter-Strike, a Steam game in which gamers interact online through voice and messages. Because he was a "weird kid", he wanted to play some alternative stuff that was not available in Brazil, so he looked for American servers and had to force himself to understand English and to understand native English-speakers talking very quickly. It was kind of punishing for him: if he did not understand something, he could loose, so his mind worked itself to build up meanings. Josh believes this was the

biggest impact as to why and how he learned to speak, in a way that he could call himself fluent at the age of 13 or 14.

In the game, Josh interacted not only with American people, but with people from around the world, mainly Europe. Because gamers only showed their voices, at first he did not feel he was taking to an American or to a British person, but like talking to "English", in an impersonal, acultural way. He felt disconnected from people, but as he gained experience in the game he started noticing differences in their accents and presuming their nationalities. This perception was boosted by the comments some users made about him, telling that he sounded like an Indian or like a 10-year old kid. Because these comments bothered him, Josh forced himself to sound like a native American, and this has had a big impact in his construction as an English speaker. He does not long to be seen as an *American* person particularly, but as a competent speaker, and for him this is closely related to the way you sound like, especially if you make professional use of the language, like in teaching.

Josh did not make close connections with CS gamers, but he met an American girl through a broadcasting website once and started a distance relationship with her. During their 6-months relationship, he would speak to her online for 6 or 7 hours everyday. She was like a "genuine" native-speaker model for him and this experience made him improve his English a lot, and his accent in particular, for his ex-girlfriend would call his attention on certain pronunciation issues. She also made him learn a bit more of American culture and realize that young people's attitudes are pretty much similar in Brazil and in the United States. Josh has never been abroad and, before meeting his ex-girlfriend, he was not eager to go to the United States. He would like to go there to visit her, otherwise he feels there is not many different things he could see there. He prefers the culture shock which he would face if he went to places like Japan, for example.

Although Josh learned English by himself, he also met great English teachers throughout his life. However, he feels that one cannot really learn from public schools no matter how teachers are. Besides regular school, he took a private language course for 2 years and a half, which he started not to learn the language, for he was already fluent, but because the school told him he could get a job there once he finished the course. Josh would also go there for the classroom interaction and because he admired his teacher a lot. In a short time she became his best friend and one of his main inspirations in life, who solidified his idea of becoming an English teacher.

In a way, Josh feels smarter when he speaks English. It is as if he can organize his thoughts and explain them better in English than in Portuguese. He attributes it for English being a simpler language, so he does not have to think much about it when he speaks. In fact, he feels less limited when expressing himself in English. His everyday life has more of English than Portuguese, because he is always reading, listening and watching things from abroad. When he is at home, he usually listens to a livestream of a guy playing games for hours, even when he is doing something else, like studying for a test. He do not usually watch things from Brazil and he does not really talk to a lot of Brazilian people, except for his friends. Josh is now engaged in writing a fantasy book in English and has already published the first chapter online. He has never been into books and has read very few ones in life, but he was inspired to do this by his ex-girlfriend, who enjoys reading. Although the story is not directly about her, he aims to give her something to remind her of their time together.

Working with English is pretty much the only thing that Josh can think of as a profession, so he is pretty much determined to pursue this degree. Initially, he wants to become a teacher, something that he has been thinking about since he was probably 13. All his inspirations were English teachers, and some of them were the kindest people to him. As for his parents, whether they like it or not, they know he will do whatever he wants to, so he is comfortable with making his own decisions. Josh sees teaching as the most important profession ever made: he understands that all professional knowledges are important, but teaching permeates everything, because it is the fundamental pillar that holds every society. He wants to be one of those pillars, that center of attention that helps people succeed in life.

Josh chose to do the interview in English.

Luana

Luana is a 17-year-old girl born in Chapecó, in western Santa Catarina. She lived her whole life in that city before moving to Florianópolis to pursue her undergraduate studies. Luana started learning English at a young age, when she was about 5 or 6 years old. A friend of her mother used to give her and her brother classes at her place, together with other children from the neighborhood, and she remembers having

fun in these classes. After this first contact, Luana took other English courses, mainly by influence of her mother, who saw this as important for her children's future. She disliked some of these courses, but, still, learning English was something that she always enjoyed doing and in school it was her favorite subject, so the learning process went very natural for her.

Besides the classes, Luana also had contact with English at home, by listening to music, watching series and playing games - those kind of things that makes one learn without really realizing it. Sometimes she talked to her brother in English, as they studied together. Luana has never been abroad and did not have many opportunities to speak to foreign people in person, except for an Australian teacher she had at a language school. However, she and her brother once gave a four-hour ride for a German family they met in a dance event. They spoke English during the whole trip and this experience was very meaningful to Luana. At first, she was afraid of speaking, so her brother did most of the talking, but as she realized she was able to talk and to understand the Germans, things went just fine, different from what she expected. In this occasion, she noticed a big difference between the way her teacher would speak (sounding like the coursebook's CD) and the way the German family spoke, with an authentic accent.

Today Luana is not confident to say she is an English speaker. She feels she was much better before, because in the past year she lost some contact with the language. In terms of an ideal as English speaker, besides some general improvement, Luana would love to have a British-like accent someday, for she finds it adorable. She does feel different when she is speaking English, in comparison to when she is speaking her first language, but she cannot explain why and what it is that changes in her personality. She feels better with her English-speaking self if she is doing well in the conversation, but if she fails to communicate the feeling is worse.

As Luana always liked and identified herself with the English subject in school, she took that into consideration when deciding upon which undergraduate degree to pursue. She had a different expectation about the English program, for she thought it would focus more on the language itself, but she is enjoying it so far. Indeed, Luana is having contact with new fields of knowledge that she did not imagine existed and that she may consider in her future career. For the time being, she would like to become a teacher, but she is uncertain if she has the necessary vocation. Luana never had any teaching experience and she feels a bit left

behind because many of her classmates already did. She is looking forward to get some preparation during her time at UFSC.

Luana also looks forward for travelling abroad. Besides Canada and the United States, which also interest her, she would love to go backpacking across Europe, visit Ireland and especially live in England for a couple of years. Maybe she will do her master's and doctoral degrees there and try to get her desired British accent.

Luana chose to do the interview in Portuguese.

Virgínia

Virgínia is 17 years old and was born in Rio do Sul, Santa Catarina. She has just moved to Florianópolis to begin her undergraduate studies. Virgínia's first contact with English was at school, at the age of 6, but it was only as a teenager that she started getting more interested in the language in order to understand what people were saying in the songs and series she liked. At that time, when she was 14, she took a private English course, but only for 6 months. A friend invited her to take this course, which was taught by their previous Portuguese school teacher. Then, Virgínia continued learning by herself through series, interviews, readings, and with the help from the internet. She has interest in languages in general, including Portuguese, and has also learned a bit of Spanish.

Although Virgínia is good with reading and understanding English, she does not consider herself an English speaker yet, because she has had few opportunities to talk to people orally. One day she got the chance to talk to one of her favorite American bands in the dressing room of their concert in Rio. She got a little nervous, but was able to ask them for an autograph. The second speaking opportunity she had was in her first day at UFSC, when she met a group of exchange students and one American girl came to talk to her. Virgínia felt some difficulty in understanding her, especially because of her accent, but it all went well. She aspires to have a British-like accent and tries to learn by copying their way of speaking, which, in her opinion, is cleaner and easier to understand. Virgínia has never been abroad, but she would like to go to many places. Her main interests are the United Kingdom and Canada. She is curious about going to English-speaking countries and getting to know the differences in terms of language and culture.

Internet has allowed Virgínia to interact with foreign people through social media too. She follows the artists she likes on twitter and sometimes asks questions to them. She also watches interviews and likes to read books in English. Among her friends, Virgínia is the one who understands better English, so their friends often come to her asking for the meaning of some words in English, as if she was their "Google Translator". People from her family also come to her when they need help with the language, like her mother who needed an abstract translated. Virgínia finds it nice when people go after her and trust her like this, because it makes her feel useful.

Virgínia finds it easier to write her thoughts in English than in Portuguese. In the past, she used to feel more comfortable and less pressured in writing personal things in English because people around her would generally not understand it, so it was something more of her own. She also feels like she assumes a different personality in English that makes it easier to express herself. One day in school, Virgínia had to write a letter to herself in the future, as part of a subject's assignment. As the teacher instructed the class to write it the way they felt more comfortable, Virgínia began writing in Portuguese but soon noticed that the words came out more naturally in English, as if she was freer in that language.

In the last year, Virgínia was actually not so sure of which university degree to pursue. She has always been interested in the human sciences and mainly in languages, but she did not want to study just Portuguese, so she opted for English, which is, among the foreign languages, the one she likes the most. For the time being, her idea for the future is to work with translation. She would like to live abroad for a while, maybe to work for some company in the area of translation, and then come back.

Virgínia believes that her life would be very different if she did not speak English, as she would, for instance, be pursuing a different degree. She would also face difficulty with information, because international things take a while to be translated into Portuguese, while in English you have access to them straight away, so it would be especially hard to depend on that.

Virgínia chose to do the interview in Portuguese.

Yumi

Yumi was born in Londrina, state of Paraná. She is 17 years old and has just finished school and moved to Florianópolis to begin her undergraduate studies. Yumi started learning English at a very young age. Because she always wanted to learn new things, at the age of 6 or 7, she asked her mother to start learning other languages. So her mother put her in two private language courses: Japanese and English. Yumi stopped learning Japanese at some point but continued learning English. She took around 10 years of English classes at the same language school. Her main contact with English was in this English course and through movies, series and songs. She invested in English mainly because of its presence around her and her desire to understand things from their original language, and also because it is a universal language.

Yumi has had several experiences abroad, in which she could practice her English in interaction with foreign people. She went twice to the U.S.: once to go to Disneyland and the other to spend a week in the University of Nevada to get to know an American university. She also went to England, where she did a 3-week exchange, and to the Holy Land, where she did a peregrination with her family. The opportunities to travel to Nevada and to England were both offered by her school at the time. The trip to the University of Nevada, in particular, has raised Yumi's interest to take a course offered at her school, whose purpose was to complement subjects given in American high schools in order to try admission in an American University.

At the time of the interview, Yumi was about to complete this course and had plans to pursue an undergraduate degree in English in the U.S.. So although Yumi is taking her first steps at UFSC, if everything goes well, she might continue her studies in the U.S.. Her choice for the English language and literature program was related to her taste for reading and her desire to work around books. She feels the program can give her opportunities to work in various areas, but the area she is interested the most is translation.

Her main contact with English nowadays is through the internet and virtual communities. She does not interact much with people online, except with friends (she has a close friend from Bulgaria who she met in England and to whom she speaks everyday), but most websites she visits are in English and she usually watches series, films and YouTube videos from abroad. Yumi usually reads things in English because information is released faster in that language. Not only is she in contact with products

from English-speaking countries, but English is also a means to access other cultures: for instance, she is interested in South Korean pop music and it is much easier to find interviews and news about k-pop artists with English subtitles than with Portuguese subtitles.

In fact, Yumi is really interested in learning other languages. What moves her is the curiosity to understand things in their original language. So when she watches something in Korean, or in Japanese, Italian, or Spanish, she wants to learn the language in order to understand their way of thinking better.

Yumi considers herself an English speaker, based on her previous successful experiences communicating with people abroad and on the English tests and courses she took. Her favorite skill in English has always been speaking, so she feels ease in communicating. She has never thought of an ideal she wants to achieve as an English speaker, but basically she would like to improve vocabulary and speak with a more natural fluency.

Yumi chose to do the interview in Portuguese.

Paula (the researcher)

My story with English has something in common with all of the participants' stories. As in most narratives, I was inserted in a context where English language was easily found. I believe the first contact I had with English was in school, where I started learning some basic vocabulary at the age of 6 (in a private school). I also remember the English textbooks I had in 3rd and 4th grade and how I enjoyed them. I think it was the idea of getting to know a different world and being able to express things through a different code that aroused my curiosity as a kid. At first, I connected English to an outside reality, as it was, in fact, a language of those "others" who lived far away. My education probably contributed to that, as I remember characters in my textbooks all had English names and I learned vocabularies such as "apple pie", which are common in the U.S., but I never had one at home.

It was my father who initially invested in my English learning. At the age of 10, he put me in a private language school and I kept taking English courses until I was 17. He would tell me he attempted to learn English during a period of his life, because it was important for his career, but the process was not easy for him. In fact, he remembers losing some

job opportunities because he lacked English skills. That way, as he did not want me or my sister to face this same problem, he decided to invest early in our future. I remember we would speak English sometimes at home, using some basic expressions, and I would often explore his adult English books because I wanted to learn more.

I do not know why I felt such a strong connection with English, but I really seized all opportunities for learning and exploring English when I was a child and then as a teenager. For example, when I was 11 or 12 years old, I would write weekly letters for my English teacher just for the sake of practicing it and – as I think it over now – also as a way of expressing myself, for I have always been a shy person and I guess I felt more courageous to try to express myself in another language. It was also, in a way, something that detached me from other people around. I remember my teacher was surprised with my initiative and replied me with fondness. Once she went to Disneyland and brought me a brochure with the park maps and all the attraction descriptions. That was like a treasure for me. I wanted to unveil everything that was there, attempting to translate all texts. I also used to translate song lyrics and kept them on a notebook.

The first foreign person I met was a British classmate in 6th or 7th grade. Her mother was Brazilian, so she spoke Portuguese fluently, but she had moved to Brazil recently. When she introduced herself in class, telling that she was from England, I immediately admired her because she was "different" and probably because she was a native English speaker. In fact, we ended up being good friends and we shared many interests in common (such as the taste for Harry Potter books or the Friends sitcom).

In fact, Friends was a great passion for me and one of the major things that made me improve my English with time. I would not only watch the episodes, but I would search for the scripts to read them online, I would browse the internet on information about the story, I would read fanfics and create my own episodes (although I did not publish them), and so on. The love for Friends and other American TV series also made me get to know new people and make friends online, as I participated in fan forums. Such forums enabled me to become friends with people from all parts of Brazil, with whom I chatted frequently or even exchanged letters through regular mail. We would usually talk in Portuguese, but often switched to English, and I remember having a long conversation with a friend from Manaus, entirely in English, which was the most intimate conversation we had. That situation made us notice that English allowed us to speak more freely, in the sense that we did not feel the "pressure" of our mother tongues upon our selves. As I did not have many friends in

my local environment, these long distance friends – which I met indirectly because of English – were very important to me, and one of them became one of my best friends in life (who I was able to meet in person afterwards).

Although I felt such a big identification for Friends and other American cultural products, like music and movies, I never nurtured a desire to go to the U.S.. On the other hand, I did nurture a strong desire to go to England, especially as a teenager. I used to picture the country in a mixture of history and fantasy… I also enjoyed the fields, the cold weather, and the cultural diversity I expected to see in London, with its many pubs and the rock 'n roll influence. I remember my travel dream was connected to the desire of experiencing a new life in a new place, for sometimes I felt a bit apart from my local reality. I also wanted to go backpacking to explore different landscapes, cultures, people.

Before I could actually accomplish that dream (which I did during my undergraduate student exchange), in my last year of secondary school, I sort of had a significant exchange experience without going abroad, as we received three exchange students (two from Germany and one from Finland) in our class. My friends and I were really eager to integrate them in our group, and, like in that occasion in 6th grade, I was really excited to make friends with foreign people and to interact with them in English. This time, there was the difference that English was not their first language either, so their relation to the language was different – it seemed only a necessity in order to communicate; they did not personally identify with it. At the same time that I saw it as an opportunity to practice my English, the girls were attempting to learn Portuguese, so our interactions changed gradually to Portuguese. Such change was also motivated by another reason: although the majority of my friends could speak English, a few of them – and one friend in particular – could not. As we started getting closer to these exchange students, they started feeling a bit left out, and this was probably the first time I realized the exclusion that English could cause. So we all attempted to speak Portuguese instead. Their presence and their friendship was very enriching for me throughout that year, as we faced and shared cultural differences all the time. They had other exchange friends who were living in town, so we were able to meet them and this was a very intercultural and special experience for me.

I believe this experience in secondary school (at a federal public school where students were much more heterogeneous) was a first transition in my life from being very attached to English to the opening for the appreciation of cultures in Portuguese and in other languages too. Not that I rejected them before, but English was often a 'safe house' for

me, and that gradually changed, in a way, as I began accepting my local identity and meeting different people with whom I established connections.

As graduation was approaching, I had to make decisions on my career and I was not certain about which way to go. As a kid, I wanted to become a writer, a teacher, and even a scientist. As a teenager, I considered a degree in Journalism, as I had always enjoyed reading and writing and I enjoyed the idea of contributing to society with information. However, I did not pass the first university entrance examination and started considering other possibilities. I entered an Administration program at UDESC to soon find out that it was not for me. Then my father encouraged me to try UFSC again and I decided to go for the English program due to my personal identification with both English and literature. In my first day of class, I finally knew I was in the right place.

During my university years, I got to learn about various fields of knowledge in the language area and the majority of them aroused my interest, including translating and teaching. I had my first real teaching experience when I was in my first year and one of my classmates asked me if I could substitute her in the public school where she worked for two days. I accepted the challenge and the experience with secondary school students was more positive than I expected. As a member of the Tutoring Education Program (PET), I also had the opportunity to teach English for the community as a volunteer – an experience that was quite significant. Fostered by the courses' theoretical readings and discussions, and by my practical classroom experiences, helping make English (and all its implied resources) accessible to disadvantaged people became a strong motivation for me. The internship experience at UFSC's Colégio de Aplicação in my final year also enhanced this motivation.

It was in my third year that I finally applied for an exchange, with the support from my family. I went to the University of Essex, in England, for one semester. That was a second turning point in my life. Not only because I was able to fulfill a dream, but because my perspective towards English and towards myself progressively changed. First of all, my personal experience in England was not one of integration into a particular target community with particular native speakers. Instead, I interacted mostly with other foreign people because the university was very internationalized and allowed me to make friends with people from various parts of the world – including English native speakers, e.g. from Australia or the U.S., and non-natives, such as from Japan, Hong Kong, Germany, Spain, Moldova, among others. It was this diverse cultural exchange that was mostly significant, in addition to what I learned from

the courses (e.g. postcolonial literature) and other extracurricular activities, as well as from the trips I managed to do during the school breaks.

Also, as I was the only Latin American exchange student in that term and as I did not have the chance to meet any Brazilian students during my time there (I believe there were some, but I never met them), I started missing my mother tongue and often held myself to Brazilian music, as if reaffirming my identity while I was surrounded by people with different backgrounds, with whom I connected through English, but often wished to connect through my mother tongue. This was part of a process of identifying myself less with English and more with Portuguese or with other languages as well (I was learning German at the time and was also interested in Spanish). This was by no means a negative process, rather one of relocating myself in the world – if I can put it that way.

My relation to accent also changed. Before traveling, I had a very American-like accent, as a result from my experiences, and I enjoyed when people asked me if I ever lived abroad because I had 'a very good English'. When I came back, I noticed that my accent was transforming into a mixture of that past accent with the added experiences I had with British and international accents, in a way that I could call it my own personal accent. That did not bother me, because this English was the result of my unique experiences, just as everyone has theirs.

Today, English is still a very important part of my everyday life: I am doing my master's, I work with translation everyday, I teach English in a preparatory course for those aiming to enter the university, I listen to music, I read news in English, and so on, but now I have a different stance towards it: it is no longer the 'place' I focus on in order to escape from my local reality, nor do I strongly identify with it or with aspects of English-specific cultures; rather, I believe I use it to be able to move around cultures and languages, to access information and produce knowledge, and, professionally, to act as a bridge in my current and future attempt to reduce language barriers and enhance people's opportunities for reflecting and acting upon the world.