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ARTIGOS DOSSIÊ

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Beyond linguistic terrorism: Hip Hop in Brazil & South Africa as decolonial communication

ABSTRACT:

This article presents a comparative study on decolonial communication practices in Hip Hop cultures from Sao Paulo (Brazil) and Cape Town (South Africa), examining how artists employ multilingualism to resist colonial linguistic terrorism. Analyzing a composition from Sao Paulo and a bilingual praxis in Cape Town's Cape Flats, the study investigates strategies of linguistic resistance and cultural citizenship in peripheral urban contexts marked by colonialism and racialization. Grounded in Bakhtinian theory of plurilingualism and Veronelli's (2016) concept of decolonial communication, this research demonstrates that Hip Hop constitutes a transnational space for circulation of African/Afrodiasporic ideas, where historically marginalized communities transform rigid monolingual spaces into dynamic multilingual places. In Sao Paulo, the incorporation of Brazilian Yoruba and Pretuguês (Black Portuguese) in rap compositions challenges Portuguese linguistic hegemony while recentering Afro-Brazilian cosmologies. In Cape Town, the Heal the Hood project exemplifies how bilingual Kaaps-English performances challenge standard language ideologies inherited from Apartheid, creating pedagogically transformative third spaces in multilingual classrooms. The comparison between both contexts reveals significant convergences in cultural resistance strategies, including use of digital technologies to create living archives of marginalized languages and knowledge, development of culturally sustaining pedagogies, and construction of transatlantic African-Afrodiasporic solidarities. Simultaneously, it illuminates specificities related to language policies and racialization histories in each country: Brazil's officially monolingual policy contrasts with South Africa's official multilingualism, yet both contexts exhibit persistent linguistic marginalization. The study contributes to broader understanding of how popular cultures promote epistemic justice and social transformation in Global South urban peripheries.

Keywords: Brazil; South Africa; Hip Hop; Decolonial communication; Linguistic citizenship

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INTRODUCTION

In 2023, during a visit to the Iziko Slave Lodge Museum in Cape Town, one could hear distant echoes of Portuguese words being sung repeatedly: "*A Luta Continua*" (The Struggle Continues). It does not take long for music enthusiasts to recognize the voice of Miriam Makeba, one of the greatest African singers in history. Her voice resonated through an exhibition room displaying photographs and documents from the 1976 student uprisings in South Africa, following the detention and murder of children in Soweto during the Apartheid era.

"*A Luta Continua*", the slogan immortalized by Miriam Makeba, was originally the independence cry of Samora Machel, the revolutionary and first president of Mozambique after the country's liberation from Portuguese colonial rule. This motto, which became renowned across the African continent, was recontextualized in the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa and continues to resonate with Afro-descendants in Brazil with the same deep sentiment that bell hooks (1994) described upon reading a verse from Adrienne Rich's poem: "This is the oppressor's language / yet I need it to talk to you".

Even when invoking the key phrase "*a luta continua*", it is not the Portuguese language that unites Brazil and Africa, but rather the shared multicultural context of countries with predominantly Black populations and the deliberate attempt to erase the multiple narratives present in these societies. The struggle (*a luta*) for the right to express oneself in diverse languages, along with their knowledge systems and cultural practices, thus continues (*continua*).

This article presents a comparative study of decolonial communication practices within the Hip Hop cultures of Sao Paulo and Cape Town, two metropolises of the Global South marked by histories of colonization, enslavement, and racialization. Both cities are home to predominantly Black peripheral populations who use Hip Hop as a tool of cultural resistance and a means of claiming linguistic citizenship (Stroud, 2009). Through the analysis of multilingual practices in Sao Paulo Rap and Hip Hop decolonial pedagogies in the Cape Flats, this study investigates convergences and specificities in the strategies of resistance to colonial linguistic terrorism (Anzaldúa, 1987) and in the transnational circulation of African and Afrodiasporic ideas.

The study contributes to three interrelated debates: first, on processes of linguistic and epistemic decolonization in urban contexts of the Global South; second, on the role of African/ Afrodiasporic popular cultures in the production and circulation of alternative knowledges; and third, on the possibilities of constructing transat-

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lantic solidarities through shared cultural practices. By placing Sao Paulo and Cape Town in comparative dialogue, the article seeks to illuminate both local specificities and broader patterns of cultural resistance.

COMPARATIVE URBAN CONTEXTS: SAO PAULO AND CAPE TOWN

Sao Paulo, the largest metropolis in Brazil and one of the largest cities in the world, is characterized by profound social and spatial inequalities that reflect the country's colonial and slaveholding legacy. The Sao Paulo peripheries, territories predominantly inhabited by Black and Brown populations, constitute spaces where the struggle for rights, recognition, and dignity is articulated through multiple forms of cultural expression, with Hip Hop being one of the most prominent.

In the Brazilian context, orality constitutes the main linguistic tool of historical resistance for peoples subjugated by colonization. Numerous attempts were made over the centuries to silence African and Indigenous languages and histories, from the imposition of Portuguese to policies of historical erasure, such as Ruy Barbosa's 1890 decree in Republican Brazil, which ordered the destruction of documents related to enslaved individuals.

The exposure of Brazilians from an early age to the documented history of European ancestors perpetuates a unilateral narrative, as historical perspectives of Africans and Indigenous peoples are frequently transmitted only through oral traditions. These stories are generally passed down by relatives via family narratives in "Pretuguês" (Black Portuguese), a term coined by Lélia Gonzalez (1984), full of expressions and sounds identified as linguistic heritage from Africa.

Although Portuguese is officially the "only" national language in Brazil, the country is characterized by de facto multilingualism, with African languages preserved in religious contexts (particularly Yoruba in African-derived religions, such as *candomblé*), Indigenous languages (such as Guarani, Tikuna, Kaingang, and Yanomami, among others) in various territories, and linguistic elements incorporated into the Brazilian Portuguese lexicon of African and Indigenous origins, for instance, words from Kimbundu or Guarani. This multilingualism, frequently rendered invisible by monolingual policies, constitutes fertile ground for cultural practices that challenge linguistic hegemonies.

Cape Town, the second-largest city in South Africa, presents a distinct context but is equally marked by colonization and racialization. The Cape Flats, vast peripheral areas of the city, were created during Apartheid as forced resettlement zones for populations classified as "coloured" and Black

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African, constituting today territories marked by poverty, violence, and marginalization.

Post-Apartheid South Africa adopted a progressive language policy, recognizing twelve official languages. However, sociolinguists argue that despite their official status, these languages are still not equally included in society, and some remain unrecognized (see for example Williams, Milani and Deumert, 2022). Kaaps (also known as Afrikaaps), is a language spoken by communities classified as "coloured" in the Cape Flats (though not exclusively), exemplifies this persistent marginalization, frequently stigmatized as "nonstandard" in relation to both Afrikaans and English.

The struggle for multilingual voices and the empowerment of historically marginalized languages in South Africa continues beyond the linguistic terrorism of colonial languages. Recently, with the rise of student protest movements, concerted efforts have been made to vocalize calls for the decolonization of language, institutional culture, and education, particularly regarding how these sustain ideological practices and standard language policies of English and Afrikaans (Makalela, 2018).

There is a need to transform linguistic communities and permanently empower historically marginalized speakers. To do so successfully, one must begin by dismantling the linguistic terrorism imposed by colonial language labels, adopting a critical stance against standard language ideologies and literacies (Makalela, 2018), and a radical stance against the "tyranny of epistemic abstract universals" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Mignolo, 2007), which undermines multilingualism across Africa as a whole (Ndhlovu & Makalela, 2021).

AFRICAN AND AFRODIASPORIC CONVERGENCES IN DIALOGUE

When comparing Sao Paulo and Cape Town, significant convergences can be identified. Both cities are characterized by: (1) predominantly Black and mixed-race peripheral populations resulting from historical processes of spatial racialization; (2) de facto multilingualism that contrasts with official monolingual language policies or policies privileging colonial languages; (3) vibrant Hip Hop cultures emerging from peripheral territories as a form of cultural resistance and voice-claiming; and (4) colonial and slaveholding legacies that continue to structure contemporary inequalities.

At the same time, specificities distinguish the two contexts. While Brazil maintains an officially monolingual language policy (despite de facto multilingualism), South Africa has adopted official multilingualism, which has not translated into effective linguistic equality. While Brazilian racialization operates through the ideology of "racial democracy," which obscures discrimination, the

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South African Apartheid system explicitly institutionalized racial categories that continue to structure contemporary society.

These convergences and specificities make the comparison between Sao Paulo and Cape Town particularly productive for understanding how African and Afrodiasporic Hip Hop cultures develop culturally situated strategies of resistance that are nonetheless transnationally connected.

LINGUISTIC TERRORISM AND LINGUISTIC CITIZENSHIP

The concept of "linguistic terrorism," as developed by Anzaldúa (1987), describes symbolic violence exercised through the imposition of colonial languages and the marginalization of the languages and communicative practices of colonized peoples. Veronelli (2015, 2016) expands this analysis by exploring the racialization of language and the differences that colonialism establishes between those who possess a language with grammar (the colonizer) and those considered difficult to understand (the colonized) – that is, those deemed "without language."

According to Veronelli, the colonizer perceives the latter as "simple communicators" using "simple communication" (2015: 118), where "simple communication" was equated with conveying "childish and primitive expressions of meaning." The colonized lacked the tools of standardization or the intellectual resources to write grammars (Meeuwis, 1999; Harries, 2007; Heller & McElhinny, 2017).

By framing the communicative practices of the colonized as simple communication, colonial fictions were established that further dehumanized colonized speakers, reducing their agency and voices through forms of racialization (Fanon, 1952; Stroud, 2020). This reductionist colonial project ideologically framed the colonized as existing "less than human communicatively" (2015, p. 118).

Veronelli (2016) developed the notion of decolonial communication drawing on the decolonial critical theory of feminist scholar María Lugones and on the framing of deep coalitions in dialogue with Édouard Glissant's (1997) notion of intercultural relation and the erosion of coloniality-of-power discourses (Quijano, 2000).

Decolonial communication aims to deconstruct the communicative practices of both colonizer and colonized in favor of a more relational notion of communication. It requires rethinking and re-theorizing language and human agency in multilingual contexts, emphasizing relational language use and cultivating egalitarian approaches to multilingual voices (both inside and outside the classroom). Fundamentally, decolonial communication recognizes that the colonized always possessed sophisticated and complex communicative

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systems, and that reducing them to "simple communicators" constituted an ideological project of dehumanization.

Bakhtinian theory of multilingualism provides complementary conceptual tools. According to Bakhtin (1981), alongside centripetal forces, there is continuous work of centrifugal forces in language. Alongside centralization and verbal-ideological unity, there are uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunity. These forces are embedded in every act of enunciation, and the processes of centralization and decentralization intersect within the utterance.

This process renders multilingualism a social and historical phenomenon, as in this centrifugal-centripetal movement, multiple social voices are present. According to Bakhtin (1981), linguistic choices are shaped by the ideology and history of each era, and their semantic values are determined by specific generations, social classes, and other strata responsible for different forms of language and variation.

For Bakhtin (1981), linguistically, socio-ideologically, and concretely conscious individuals, when artistically active, are inherently surrounded by polyphonic discourse rather than a single, unambiguous, definitive language. The colonial idea of presenting only one version of history, establishing a single official European language, and disregarding all other surrounding social voices contradicts the true nature of language, which is dynamic and thrives at the margins.

In contemporary contexts, orality renews itself by adopting new forms and reinterpreting its materiality, as observed in Hip Hop. Yet it continues to engage with the past, dialoguing with previous references while also diverging from dominant discourses of both past and present.

Linguistic Citizenship, a concept proposed by Stroud (2009), offers a framework to address, highlight, and recover the neglected semiotics of historically marginalized linguistic agents and voices in transforming societies. The concept emphasizes the role of language policy in shaping citizenship and challenges sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists to reconceptualize citizenship through the lens of language.

A central principle of Hip Hop culture is self-understanding and sharing that knowledge through cultural expression (Williams, 2019). According to Pardue (2008), Hip Hop artists in Brazil are acutely aware of their marginal status. They view Hip Hop not only as a tool to challenge corrupt and limiting social categories but also as a means of using the experience and discourse of marginality to elevate themselves, transforming the periphery into a space and concept centered on empowerment.

Hip Hop has long been characterized as an independent discursive musical space of re-

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sistance, amplified by both old and new media (Alim, 2009). It provides a space where social voices can exist, resist, and re-exist through their own cultures and languages, engaging in dialogue and responding within a discursive arena (Voloshinov, 1986) that recenters marginalized identities and challenges dominant discourse.

ACROSS MULTILINGUAL TRANSATLANTIC MARGINS

In this study, using a comparative qualitative approach, we analyze decolonial communication practices within Hip Hop cultures in Sao Paulo and Cape Town.

The selection of cases followed the criteria of: cultural relevance (recognition within local Hip Hop communities) and representativeness of the multilingual and decolonial practices under investigation. In the Sao Paulo case, the analysis focuses on compositions by Sabotage, a rapper widely recognized as one of the most influential figures in Brazilian Hip Hop. In the South African case, the study examines Emile YX? and the Heal the Hood project.

The comparative analysis aims to identify: (1) strategies of multilingualism and incorporation of marginalized languages; (2) forms of resistance to colonial linguistic terrorism; (3) the construction of African/Afrodiasporic identities through discursive practices; (4) the transnational circulation of ideas and cultural practices; and (5) contextual specificities related to language policies and histories of racialization.

It is acknowledged that comparing such distinct contexts presents methodological challenges. However, as Ndhlovu and Makalela (2021) argue, comparative studies across Global South contexts are essential for decentering Eurocentric theories and methodologies in the social sciences and humanities, allowing for the construction of knowledge that is both locally situated and transnationally relevant.

SAO PAULO: *SABOTAGE* AND *PRETUGUÊS* IN MOTION

Hip Hop gained momentum in Brazil between the late 1980s and early 1990s, with the increasing popularity of Rap beats, which were well received and established as the “authentic soundtrack of the periphery,” chosen by Black youth as a means of expression (Andrade, 2010). According to Andrade, “where there is a periphery, there is Rap”: the ethical crisis in contemporary society demanded that social problems and inequalities, typical of underprivileged communities vulnerable to violence and marginalization, no longer be viewed through a lens of prejudice and stereotype.

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The ethical, aesthetic, and musical development of this genre gains strength in countries with significant Black populations, precisely because its form symbolizes themes centered on issues of exclusion. Rap emerged strongly influenced by Black music, drawing upon and reinterpreting ancestral oral traditions of African griots. Andrade (2010) notes that this tradition is also evident in various forms of spoken singing in Brazil. According to Andrade, Rap, "descendant of funk, grandson of soul, and great-grandson of spirituals and blues," is also a sibling of rock and a cousin of reggae, and in Brazil, it intertwined with *samba*, *maracatu*, and *embolada*.

Sabotage was one of Brazil's most influential rappers, tragically murdered in 2003. Although he had distanced himself from crime for over ten years and had been "saved by Rap music", as the artist himself stated, this unfortunate outcome ended the life of one of the greatest figures of Brazilian Hip Hop.

In his composition "*Cabeça de Nego*", stylistic elements of Rap music are prominently presented through the fusion of electronic beats with *samba* drum rhythms. Below, I present the complete song, highlighting excerpts in Brazilian Yoruba or sections referencing Afro-Brazilian religious culture:

Iê ***Obá Olorum Modupé Odara Odara***
O nêgo não pára no tempo não
Suas origens vêm de Angola há um bom tempo
Sabó tizil Brasil, bem Brasil, no Rio, do verdinho cabeça de nêgo
Desfecho conforme vive o vento se mostra
Respeito pro povo
Um ofenso universo
Protetor do ***Orum****, que olhou colheu o ouro*
Ouro no ***Olorum***
Modupé

O nêgo não pára no tempo
Teve um tormento, a dor que é forte se sentiu lá dentro
Maracutaia lá do norte, o mano vai viver
Maracutaia segue a seco um dia irá chover
Sabe por quê?

O nêgo não paga veneno pode acreditar, se você já sabe a um bom tempo
O nêgo para um bom tempo, seja África, Brasil, brasileiro
Maracutaia em toda parte, vejo no governo
Tem ACM, Lalau, pra deixar tormento
Tem muito tempo o pobre pagando veneno
Mesa branca, ***Aruanda****, que canta com fama*
Diz, manda a mensagem, Canão!

O Nêgo não pára no tempo
Teve um tormento, a dor que é forte se sentiu lá dentro
Maracutaia lá do norte o mano vai viver
Maracutaia segue a seco um dia irá chover
Sabe por quê?

Ei bebê um bebezin Tiriri ionã eu vi
Um bebezin Tirir iônã

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Faço o que faço há um bom tempo, chegado
Eu tô com carro parado, uma preta do lado
Empapuçado de mato
Rica (chegado) chega
Empresta um cigarro, se pá, não pago besteira
Brasil tô na palma, pandeiro não pára
De Porto Alegre à Candelária, um bom tempo na praia
Porque o nego não pára, não pára, não pára, há um bom tempo
O nego não pára, África vejo o momento
Tipo Anastácia, Tereza
Relembra ***Mãe Meninha do Gantois*** *pode crê*
Cê sempre vai ter vida!
Maracanã lotado, o desastrado, por isso já é sábado
Tudo o que eu faço é torcer
Mais vai ver a trajetória do Timão vencer
Periferia sofre em vida, mas tira um lazer
Quem é o defensor do Orum vai saber dizer
Quem é o protetor da guerra vai saber viver

O Nêgo não pára no tempo
Teve um tormento, a dor que é forte, se sentiu lá dentro
Maracutaia lá do norte, o mano vai viver
Maracutaia segue a sede um dia irá chover
Sabe por quê?

Faço o que faço, não quero pedaço
Sou nêgo véio chegado, talvez tô com mato
Enlaricado, empapuçado, muita sede do lado
Chegando sempre vejo um preto, vou mandando o recado
Sabote, vejo sim, quero dizer que vim, do Brooklin surgi aqui
Que reivindiquei estou aqui porque
Um novo tempo vai poder dizer que, é
Sobre um passado de um tempo presente
Moleque de black, descalço, vou chapando o coco, correndo no morro
Aeroporto vivo vivo, Água Espraiada é assim, é
O tempo todo Deus está por mim
Porque eu faço o que faço não mando recado
E faço o que faço, não mando recado
(Diz) faço o que faço não mando recado
(Sim) faço o que faço não mando recado

O nêgo não pára no tempo
Teve um tormento, a dor que é forte, se sentiu lá dentro
Maracutaia, lá do norte o mano vai viver
Maracutaia, segue a seco um dia irá chover
Sabe por quê?

In this rap song, Sabotage portrays the daily life of Black individuals, the experience of living in the *favela*, the influence of Africa, and the religious protection that is woven into the narrative as a strategy for coping with the daily oppression caused by poverty and politics. He makes repeated claims for *space* and *time*, referencing various geographical locations – the neighborhoods, the *favela*, the cities – and mentions the African continent (*Brasil, Rio, África, Favela do Canão, de Porto Alegre à Candelária*). There is also an imagery and identity space when he demands respect for the people (*respeito pro povo*) and when he mentions

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Aruanda, which is considered a sacred place in the spiritual realm according to some Afro-Brazilian religions. By referencing time, Sabotage repeatedly emphasizes in the song's chorus that the Black people do not remain stagnant in time (*o nêgo não pára no tempo*) despite the pain they feel, their origins being from Africa serve as a reference to the past, he engages in various wordplay with the term "*tempo*": *Que reivindiquei estou aqui porque / Um novo* ***tempo*** *vai poder dizer que é / Sobre um passado de um* ***tempo*** *presente*. In this song, the flow of time intertwines with identity influences, positioning Black people as constantly in movement, both in terms of struggle and in the spatial-temporal dimension.

Where the Yoruba words in their Brazilian variant are featured, the *orixás* highlighted include: *Obá, Olorum, Tiriri* and *Ogum* (the war protector mentioned by the artist). The song also includes words such as: *modupé* (a form of gratitude), *odara* (a term related to beauty or goodness) and Orum (Orun in the African version), which refers to the spiritual realm.

More than merely translating these ideological statements expressed in various Hip Hop compositions in Brazil, it is important to emphasize the historical and cultural contribution of these linguistic records, particularly given that orality is a key strength of these productions. In the performances of these artists, the general audience often chants sounds of words they do not understand but resonates with the ideology and admires the aesthetic constructions, even if they do not know their meaning. On the other hand, segments of the audience who speak these languages, or in the case of Brazilian Yoruba, recognize the words, feel represented as members of the discourse community.

In this way, Hip Hop has facilitated the survival and resistance of African and indigenous languages, placing them in social dialogue with societies that have long privileged only the languages of the colonizers. Furthermore, from a stylistic perspective, it engages with samples and remixes, which, through this musical aesthetic, also incorporate voices into this semiotic discursive construction.

The existence of electronic music, which encompasses the aesthetics of Rap, was made possible only with the emergence of new technologies in the 1980s. The Internet, in turn, enabled the distribution and inclusion of new artists who previously could only reach a global audience if accepted by major record labels. The significance of these practices lies largely in the reach Hip Hop has achieved, while simultaneously providing a space where social voices can exist, resist, and re-exist through their own cultures and languages.

In the Brazilian context, where official documents were destroyed, such as Barbosa's decree

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ordering the destruction of records related to slavery, Rap compositions function as digital oral documents that preserve languages, memories, and perspectives that might otherwise have been lost. They constitute living archives of Afro-Brazilian knowledge that resist colonial epistemicide.

CAPE TOWN: DECOLONIAL COMMUNICATION AND HIP HOP EDUCATION

The Cape Flats constitute vast peripheral areas of Cape Town, created during Apartheid as forced resettlement zones. Today, they are characterized by poverty, violence, and marginalization, but also by rich cultural production, including a vibrant Hip Hop scene.

Kaaps is a language spoken by communities classified as "coloured" in the Cape Flats, exemplifies persistent linguistic marginalization in post-apartheid South Africa. Viewed through a decolonial lens, the racist foundations on which colonial and apartheid languages were established have become a racializing technology that redefined discriminatory practices against multilingual Kaaps speakers.

Colonial and apartheid language discourses have always combined dominance and deficit in the education of historically racialized speakers (Alexander, 2000), given the unassailable position of such languages. Veronelli (2015, 2016) suggests that much can be gained from a decolonial communication approach to the language use of historically marginalized multilingual speakers, particularly in relation to colonial and Apartheid languages, focusing on alternative practices of multilingual learners who draw on Hip Hop to redefine and decolonize learning and education.

Emile YX? is a hip hop artist, language activist and co-founder of the Heal the Hood project in Cape Town. As a staunch believer in the emancipation and empowerment of historically racialized and disenfranchised speakers, Emile, with a team of Hip Hop artists and activists, has over the last decades worked to transform the education of bilingual and multilingual Kaaps speakers on the Cape Flats of Cape Town (Williams, 2019). As Hip Hop language activist and former teacher, he and others have raised critical awareness of literacy and language, inequalities in the school system and the many social and institutional ills that impact individuals and communities on the Cape Flats.

Emile has an active social media presence. On the 22nd March 2017, for example, he posted a video clip on his Facebook page, entitled "1st March 1510 – Our story, Told our Way – Afrikaaps"[1], of him re-structuring and re-narrating a pre-colonial story of the Khoi fighting the Portuguese in front of a Grade 9 classroom. The video posted on his Facebook page provides insights into

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the decolonial communication practices of narratives learned through standard English and bilingual learning that captures the lived, cultural realities of Kaaps speakers. The description given below the posted video opens with an argument by Emile to consider the specificity of language teaching of bilingual Kaaps-English speakers, a consideration for the bilingual repertories of Kaaps learner because, as he argues, "we would all do so much better in school". This argument stems from Emile's years of experience of being a teacher, followed by the day-to-day Hip hop language activism that provides a window onto the literacy and language learning challenges Kaaps-English bilingual learners encounter inside the multilingual classroom. Emile was interested in how learners in the classroom would react to the use of their bilingual repertoires in "the way they know stories to be told on the Cape Flats" in their classroom where standard English language use and behaviours were the norm.

Emile exploited a third space of learning that allowed alternative genres and practices – usually found, practiced and performed outside the multilingual classroom – and decolonial communication practices to enter. In other words, rather than sustaining a reductionist, language gap environment of the English and Kaaps resources the learners often use to manage every day and abstract knowledge, Emile spotlighted the value of Kaaps-English bilingual repertoires and knowledges that could importantly feed into the multilingual classroom curriculum and practices. By reframing the communicative practices of the learners and emphasizing bilingual repertoire as an important resource, the learner's linguistic agency and linguistic citizenship, including his lived cultural experiences, the full communicative self of the learner is deemed of important epistemic value for the multilingual classroom. These decolonial communication manoeuvres by Emile are subsequently elevated in genre and function as he performs what a bilingual story in the learners' classroom *must do* rather than *should do* in expressing local indigenous knowledge. In the video, he proceeds to re-narrate a pre-colonial resistance story bilingually, in Kaaps-English: the 1510 encounter between the local Khoi population and the seafaring Portuguese trading then at the Cape of Good Hope:

Extract 1: "In 1510…"

1. Emile: In 1510… .Now Ima tell a story to you like we tell a story. Like, *"Kykie, as djy ytstiek op 'n Maandag, my broe!" "Djy, djy moet gewiet et wat die weekend angegaan het…yorrr!"* ("Look, if you come on Monday, my man!" "You, you, need to know what happend this weekend past...daamn!").

2. Learners: [Wild laughter from Stu-

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dents]

3. Emile: The funny part about this is he said [pointing to a student in the class] that he sounds like that neh. And then it is *Yor! Die skote klap daa innie Tafelsig my broe! Ôs val, ôs val, djy hoo net bah! Bah! Bah! Bah!* (Shots rang out in Tafelsig my man! We fall, we fall, you just hear bah! Bah! Bah! Bah!) But when you open up a school book, "This weekend… [mock standard English tone]

4. Learners: [Wild laughter from Students]

5. Emile: And then they wanna know why we don't read...

6. Learners: *Ja* (Yes)

7. Emile: …because we can't relate to a story without feeling, understand. So, I tell you this story. This story on this day as it happened. *Kykie, ôs ennie anne Boesmanne os lam daso. Ôs ryk, kyk, wat stink soe 'n moerse hou my broe!* (Look, we and the other Bushman hang out there. We get this smell, look, to see where the smell is coming from my man!)

8. Learners: [wild laughter from students]

9. Emile: *Ôs follow die stink…oppie beach. Aweh. Alwee die skepe my broe. Hulle land. Hulle vra. Hulle soek wate. Ôs se, het julle geld? Djy kry nie wate viniet hie nie. Jarre, hulle wys vi os die shiney goetes. Ôs voel 'n biechie sorry want hulle lyk ytgiteer. Hulle lyk bliek my broe, daaie ees colour in hulle vel nie.* (We follow the smell… to the beach. You see. Again these ships my man. They land. They ask. They're looking for water. We ask, do you have money? You're not getting any water for free. Damn, they show us these shiney things. We feel a bit sorry for them because they look this. They look white my man, not even colour in their skin.)

In the above extract, Emile presents a narrative in English and in Kaaps, shuttling the story-telling functionality of Kaaps into the multilingual classroom. His privileging of languages on equal footing in the story is a practice the learners relate to. He begins the story in English, but then rapidly transition into the use of Kaaps, much to the delight of the learners. Wildly gesturing like an Kaaps speaker would, he narrates a story full of action and proceeds to reinterpret the pre-colonial story of the Khoi encountering the Portuguese by relating it to the lived realities of the learners living in Mitchells Plain. Parodying the Standard English of the classroom and the curriculum, the point Emile pushes home is that we can only relate to a story – even one of a pre-colonial encounter – if it is told by us, and draws on our own language, that is, Kaaps. As he narrates, Emile does not privilege English but demonstrates the genre resourcefulness of remixing English with Kaaps.

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This remixing demonstrates also the value of bilingual storytelling as a form of decolonial communication. In other words, Emile's use of Kaaps with English delinks from abstract English-learning universals and the meta-hegemony of racialized Englishes (such as Coloured English) that has come to justify the epistemics of language teaching and learning for so-called coloured bilingual learners under apartheid regime. On the one hand, Emile shuttles into the classroom the informalized, low-function, but culturally rich practices of bilingual and multilingual story-telling that the Kaaps learners engage in on a daily basis. On the other hand, he demonstrates the pedagogical potential of Kaaps as an additional resource, and how to maximize (and not minimize, following Bauman and Brigss, 1990) and open up standard ideologized genres of storytelling for an authentic decolonial experience of storytelling as a genre in the multilingual classroom.

Emile's interaction with multilingual students in the classroom was preceded by long-standing language activism that partly defines the Heal the Hood project. As a non-governmental organization, Heal the Hood project aims to transform the education of multilingual Kaaps learners (Haupt & Alim, 2017). The project implements decolonial communication to challenge reductionist and deficit-oriented approaches to English teaching and flows within the basic education system, emphasizing culturally sustaining practices and local indigenous knowledge systems that contest the universalization and epistemic erasure imposed by the tyranny of racialized varieties such as Coloured English and standardized English norms imposed by white speakers.

Being aware of the structures, ideologies, and practices of racialized English that hinder full bilingualism for Kaaps learners, Emile and the Heal the Hood project employed Hip Hop culture to introduce learners to the rap music genre, thereby infusing teaching and learning practices as part of building communities of decolonial communication style (following Alim, 2009) within schools and classrooms.

CONVERGENCES & SPECIFICITIES

In both Sao Paulo and Cape Town, Hip Hop cultures develop multilingual practices that resist colonial linguistic terrorism. In Sao Paulo, Sabotage incorporates Brazilian Yoruba and Pretuguês in his compositions, challenging the hegemony of Standard Portuguese while invoking Afro-Brazilian cosmologies through references to *orixás*. In Cape Town, Emile YX? and his students perform Kaaps–English that challenges both standard language ideologies and linguistic hierarchies inherited from apartheid.

Both contexts demonstrate that multilin-

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gualism is not merely a linguistic phenomenon, but also a political and epistemic one. The deliberate choice to incorporate marginalized languages into public cultural practices constitutes an act of resistance that recenters the knowledge, cosmologies, and experiences of historically silenced communities. As Veronelli (2016) argues, decolonial communication requires not only the symbolic recognition of linguistic diversity but also a fundamental transformation in how we understand human communication, rejecting colonial reductionism that classifies certain communicative practices as "simple" or "inferior."

A key convergence between Sao Paulo and Cape Town lies in their use of digital technologies to preserve and circulate oral practices that have historically constituted a primary form of cultural resistance among colonized peoples. In both contexts, rap compositions and recordings of pedagogical performances function as living archives that document languages, knowledge, and cultural practices.

This dimension is particularly relevant given the histories of documentary erasure in both countries. In Brazil, the destruction of records and the institutional monolingualism left significant gaps in the nation's historical archives. In South Africa, the apartheid regime systematically marginalized and devalued the languages and knowledge of non-white populations. Within these contexts, Hip Hop operates as an alternative mode of historical preservation that resists colonial epistemicide.

Unlike traditional archives controlled by elites, the digital archives generated through Hip Hop cultures are decentralized, accessible, and continually updated. The internet and streaming platforms enable the global circulation of this knowledge, connecting the periferias of Sao Paulo with the Cape Flats and other African and Afrodiasporic territories across the world.

In both cases, Hip Hop serves as a form of cultural pedagogy that educates youth about their histories, identities, and rights in ways that formal educational systems often fail to do. As Alim and Haupt (2017) argue, Hip Hop functions as a culturally sustaining pedagogy that not only recognizes but celebrates and cultivates the cultural practices of historically marginalized communities.

Emile YX?'s work explicitly demonstrates how culturally sustaining pedagogies can transform learning environments. By creating third spaces where students' multilingual repertoires are valued and culturally relevant genres are integrated, it challenges deficit narratives that portray multilingual learners as linguistically inadequate. Instead, learners are recognized as possessors of sophisticated communicative resources that constitute epistemic assets.

Despite these significant convergences, notable specificities distinguish the Brazilian and

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South African contexts. Brazil's officially monolingual linguistic policy contrasts sharply with South Africa's official multilingualism. In Brazil, the absence of formal recognition of multilingualism corresponds to the invisibilization of existing multilingual practices. In South Africa, the official recognition of twelve languages has not translated into effective linguistic equality, creating a contradiction between policy rhetoric and persistent marginalization. This contradiction generates specific frustrations that are frequently articulated within South African Hip Hop cultures.

Systems of racialization also differ significantly. Brazil's ideology of "racial democracy" obscures discrimination through the myth of harmonious *mestiçagem*, while South Africa's Apartheid system explicitly institutionalized racial categories that continue to structure society. These differences shape how artists and activists articulate resistance: in Brazil, often through the proud affirmation of *negritude* that challenges invisibilization; in South Africa, through direct confrontation of inherited racial categories and their linguistic consequences.

Finally, the comparison reveals how Hip Hop cultures facilitate the transnational circulation of African and Afrodiasporic ideas and practices of freedom. The phrase *A Luta Continua*, which traveled from Mozambique to South Africa and resonates in Brazilian periferias, exemplifies this circulation. Similarly, concepts such as "resistance", "empowerment," and "linguistic citizenship" circulate through transnational Hip Hop networks, being reinterpreted and adapted to specific local contexts.

This circulation occurs not only through musical influences but also through political solidarities and cultural identifications that transcend national borders. As Williams (2019) observes, unique configurations of multilingual resources emerge as young multilingual speakers navigate global and local contexts, blending multiple linguistic and semiotic systems. This process results in a "glocal" remixing of multilingualism, where local and global elements intersect simultaneously.

The *periferias* of Sao Paulo and the Cape Flats do not share Portuguese, the colonial language historically linking Brazil and South Africa, but rather experiences of marginalization, racialization, and struggles for dignity. This solidarity, rooted in shared experiences and mediated through Hip Hop cultures, constitutes a form of African/Afrodiasporic internationalism that resists exclusionary nationalisms and builds transnational alliances for social transformation.

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HIP HOP, LINGUISTIC CITIZENSHIP AND EPISTEMIC JUSTICE

The comparative analysis between Sao Paulo and Cape Town demonstrates that Hip Hop cultures constitute privileged spaces for decolonial communication practices and the exercise of linguistic citizenship (Stroud, 2009). In both contexts, artists and activists use Hip Hop to challenge colonial linguistic terrorism, promote plural narratives, and claim the right to express themselves in their own languages.

This claim is not merely symbolic. As demonstrated through the analysis of Sabotage's compositions and Emile YX?'s pedagogical work, decolonial communication practices have material consequences for language and knowledge preservation, identity construction, educational transformation, and community empowerment.

The concept of linguistic citizenship proposed by Stroud provides a valuable framework for understanding these practices. Linguistic citizenship goes beyond liberal notions of language rights (i.e., the right to use a particular language in specific contexts) by emphasizing linguistic agency, the capacity of historically marginalized speakers to shape language policies, challenge dominant language ideologies, and create spaces in which their communicative practices are valued.

Hip Hop facilitates the exercise of linguistic citizenship in multiple ways. First, it creates public spaces where marginalized languages and linguistic varieties are performed and celebrated, thereby challenging established linguistic hierarchies. Second, through digital circulation, it amplifies the reach of these performances, generating accessible archives and transnational networks. Third, as demonstrated by the Heal the Hood project, it can transform educational institutions by fostering pedagogical practices that recognize and cultivate students' multilingual repertoires.

Moreover, the decolonial communication practices observed in Hip Hop cultures of Sao Paulo and Cape Town contribute to epistemic justice. As Veronelli (2016) argues, the colonial project not only marginalized specific languages but also framed the communicative practices of colonized peoples as "simple" or "inferior," thereby denying them the status of legitimate knowledge producers. Decolonial communication challenges this framing by demonstrating the sophistication, complexity, and epistemic value of marginalized communicative practices.

Sabotage, by incorporating Brazilian Yoruba and Afro-Brazilian cosmologies into a composition that circulates globally, not only preserves language and religious knowledge but recenters them as legitimate sources of wisdom, ethical guidance, and world understanding. Similarly, when Emile YX? and his students perform Kaaps-English bilin-

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gualism in the classroom, they challenge deficit narratives that devalue the knowledge and cultural practices of Cape Flats communities.

Hip Hop also operates through Bakhtinian centrifugal forces that destabilize attempts at linguistic centralization. By creating spaces where multiple languages and social voices coexist and interact, it transforms rigidly monolingual spaces into dynamic multilingual ones. As Bakhtin (1981) observes, the notion of presenting only one version of history or establishing a single official language runs counter to the very nature of language, which is dynamic and thrives in the margins.

In the context of globalization, Hip Hop cultures demonstrate that globalization need not entail cultural or linguistic homogenization. When mediated by historically marginalized communities, it can amplify local voices and build transnational networks of solidarity. The glocal remixing observed in Sao Paulo and Cape Town reveals possibilities for a counter-hegemonic globalization that resists neocolonial cultural impositions.

Finally, the comparison between Sao Paulo and Cape Town contributes to the decentering of Eurocentric theories in sociolinguistic and anthropological studies. As Ndhlovu and Makalela (2021) argue, comparative studies between Global South contexts are essential for the construction of situated yet transnationally relevant knowledge. By focusing on resistance practices developed in Brazilian and South African urban peripheries, this study illuminates the creative strategies through which communities navigate colonial legacies and construct more just futures.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This comparative study has demonstrated that the Hip Hop cultures of Sao Paulo and Cape Town constitute contemporary manifestations of the historical resistance of colonized peoples who, through orality, have kept their languages, knowledge, and identities alive. In both the Sao Paulo peripheries and the Cape Flats, Hip Hop functions as a space of decolonial communication, where historically marginalized communities exercise linguistic citizenship, challenge colonial linguistic terrorism, and promote epistemic justice.

The analysis revealed significant convergences between the two contexts. In both cases, artists and activists develop multilingual practices that resist colonial linguistic hegemonies, use digital technologies to create living archives of marginalized languages and knowledge, and construct culturally sustaining pedagogies that empower multilingual youth. Simultaneously, specificities related to language policies and histories of racialization shape the particular forms that resistance assumes in each context.

The composition by Sabotage analyzed in

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this study demonstrates how the incorporation of Brazilian Yoruba and *Pretuguês* into Sao Paulo rap recenters Afro-Brazilian cosmologies and challenges the erasure of African knowledge in Brazilian society. The pedagogical work of Emile YX? and the Heal the Hood project illustrate how Hip Hop can transform South African educational environments, creating third spaces in which students' bilingual repertoires are valued and culturally relevant practices are incorporated.

Theoretically grounded in concepts of decolonial communication (Veronelli, 2016), Bakhtinian plurilingualism, and linguistic citizenship (Stroud, 2009), our study seeks to contribute to three interrelated debates. First, to discussions about linguistic and epistemic decolonization in urban contexts of the Global South. Second, to the role of African and Afro-diasporic popular cultures in the production and circulation of alternative knowledge. Third, to the possibilities of constructing transnational solidarities through shared cultural practices.

The implications of this study extend beyond academic analysis. For language and education policymakers, it highlights the urgency of recognizing and valuing the multilingual practices of historically marginalized communities, not only symbolically, but through substantive institutional transformations. For educators, it evidences the potential of culturally sustaining pedagogies that incorporate culturally relevant genres and practices.

For social movements and community organizations, the analysis offers insights into effective strategies for cultural resistance and transnational solidarity-building. Projects such as Heal the Hood demonstrate concrete possibilities of transformation through cultural activism grounded in the needs and resources of local communities.

Future research could expand the comparative scope by including other Global South cities where Hip Hop cultures develop decolonial communication practices. Longitudinal studies tracking the trajectories of youth engaged in Hip Hop could provide insights into the long-term impacts of these practices. Furthermore, exploring intersections between Hip Hop and other cultural movements of resistance (such as Afro-Brazilian religious music, popular theatre, or slam poetry) could reveal broader patterns of cultural resistance.

Finally, it is important to recognize limitations and contradictions. Despite its transformative potential, Hip Hop is not immune to commercialization, the reproduction of gender and sexual inequalities, or co-optation by neoliberal interests. Continuous critical analysis of these tensions is essential for a nuanced understanding of Hip Hop cultures.

Despite such limitations, the Hip Hop cultures of Sao Paulo and Cape Town demonstrate

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that it is possible to create decolonial communication practices that move beyond the symbolic recognition of diversity. Through multilingual performances, culturally sustaining pedagogies, and linguistic activism, artists and activists construct spaces in which historically marginalized speakers exercise full linguistic and cultural agency.

Hip Hop artists and activists navigate complex negotiations between colonial and ancestral languages, between standardized forms and local variations, between oral traditions and digital technologies. In these negotiations, they create hybrid spaces where multiple languages and voices coexist, engage in dialogue, and transform both the margins and the centers of linguistic and cultural power.

The struggle for the right to express oneself in diverse languages, along with the knowledge and cultures they carry, continues. Hip Hop, as a contemporary heir of African griots and oral traditions of resistance, keeps this struggle alive, connecting past and future, local and global, margins and centers.

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NOTES

[1]Although Emile refers to “Afrikaaps” in the title of the video, we employ the glossonym “Kaaps” in accordance with current scholarly usage.

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