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Sociolinguistics and (in)securitisation as another mode of governance

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Sociolinguistics and (in)securitisation as another mode of governance

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Abstract

This paper argues that (in)securitisation – “making ‘enemy’ and ‘fear’ the integrative, energetic principle of politics” (Huysmans 2014:3) – now calls for much fuller attention than it has hitherto received in sociolinguistics, and that it should figure alongside ‘standardisation’ and ‘marketisation’ as a major mode of governance shaping and shaped in language ideology and communicative practice. After a sketch of the two conceptions of governance that have dominated in sociolinguistics over the last 50 years, the paper draws on Foucault and Mbembe’s ‘necropower’ to introduce (in)securitisation and its historical and contemporary role in the formation of nation-states and the management of large populations. It then outlines some of (in)securitisation’s prototypical features (states of exception; enemies & inferiorised ‘races’; walls and fortifications; intensified alertness; silencing), turning after that to (in)securitisation’s entanglement with standard language in two empirical studies. In one, people living in favelas in Rio de Janeiro experience ongoing violence from drug traffickers and police, but have developed digital media practices and a discursive register to resist this (*counter*-securitisation); in the other, Greek-Cypriot secondary school teachers and students navigate post-war reconciliation through precarious engagement with Turkish, the language of the former enemy (*de*-securitisation). There are substantial differences between these two sites, indicating the need for close, sustained ethnography, as well as the difficulties facing any attempt to predict the sociolinguistic effects of (in)securitisation. Even so, (in)securitisation is still vital to an understanding of how people in these places orient to standard language, and beyond this, with the pandemic, increased geopolitical instability and the Climate Emergency, it is hard to doubt (in)securitisation’s growing relevance to a plurality of sociolinguistic processes and practices.

This paper addresses securitisation as a mode of governance, as a way of managing populations, in which the normal laws and rules guiding citizens in contemporary liberal democracies don’t apply, and instead, people act as if there is a state of exception (or a state of siege) where there are existential threats and the strong possibility of violence and/or death.¹ Securitisation is “a practice of making ‘enemy’ and ‘fear’ the integrative, energetic principle of politics displacing the democratic principles of freedom and justice” (Huysmans 2014:3), and like communication itself, it usually works in two or more directions – security to one person can be insecurity to another, and this may change with the situation, sometimes quite quickly. To capture this, some scholars speak of (in)securitisation (Bigo & McCluskey, 2018: 126), and our overall contention in this paper is that, at least in the applied and sociolinguistic literatures in English, Greek and Portuguese

¹ Historically, in research on International Relations, securitisation has a relatively specialised meaning, referring to the discourse of governments and other authoritative actors (Buzan & Waever 2003). But as will become clear, our use of the term is much more general, covering the range of processes covered in security studies (see e.g. Bigo 2002; Huysmans 2014).

that we are familiar with, (in)securitisation warrants much more attention than it has hitherto received.² Indeed we will argue that (in)securitisation should enter the repertoire of sociolinguistic analysis as a major theme, joining concepts like ‘standardisation’ and ‘commodification’, adding ‘security’ to ‘correctness’ and ‘profit’ as a fundamental issue for research on communication, capable of influencing language in all of the empirical arenas that applied and socio-linguists study (language policy, public discourse, language learning, ground-level interactional practice etc).

To develop this argument, we start with a brief sketch of sociolinguistics and the study of multilingualism over the last 50 years, spotlighting its central preoccupations and the prominence it has given to standardisation first and later to marketisation. We then turn to (in)securitisation: this has in fact also played a very prominent part in the management of large populations, and to develop this case, we bring in Foucault and then Mbembe on ‘necropower’, moving from there to a fuller outline of (in)securitisation’s prototypical features (including inferiorised ‘races’ as well as enemies, physical and/or symbolic walls, intensified alertness, efforts to silence opposition). The practical enactment of (in)securitisation and the resistances that it generates call for detailed analysis, drawing on the full repertoire of concepts that sociolinguists can bring to the analysis of different modes of governance (ideological representations, interactional practices and events, institutional roles, genres, registers etc).³ To illustrate (in)securitisation in operation, several empirical snapshots, set in historical context, are then drawn from two sites where we have been investigating language and security for some time, Rio de Janeiro (Silva, since 2012), and Cyprus (Charalambous, since 2006). Certainly, there are substantial differences between these settings and the scenes that we describe:

- in Rio, Brazilian citizens living in favelas experiencing the necro-power of drug traffickers and the police, with favela residents themselves stereotyped as criminals and for the most part abandoned by due legal process, while activist collectives challenge this, paying close attention to language in strategies of *counter*-securitisation, recognising existential threats but advancing alternative analyses and solutions;
- in Cyprus, the reconciliation of Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot communities becoming a political possibility after a long period of total separation following war and inter-communal violence, and in Greek-Cypriot schools, the introduction of Turkish, the language of the (former) enemy, as part of the effort to *de*-securitise Turkish-Cypriots, intimating that they are no longer seen as a threat and can be reintegrated in civil society.

² Language research certainly hasn’t completely ignored fear, suspicion and violent conflict, and there is important work in critical discourse analysis (e.g. Hodges (ed) 2013; MacDonald & Hunter 2013; Khan 2017), in linguistic anthropology (Briggs 1997; Silva & Lee 2020; Blommaert 2009; Maryns 2006; Jacquemet 2011), in translation & interpreting studies (e.g. Busch 2016b; Footitt and Kelly (eds.) 2012), and educational linguistics (e.g. Valdés 2017; Zakharia 2020) (for a literature review, see P. Charalambous 2017). But it is not yet obvious that this work is regarded as a core concern rather than a specialist niche or a field of practical application.

³ These analytical resources are well-matched to Foucault’s conception of power, which Jessop characterises follows: “The study of power should begin from below, in the heterogeneous and dispersed micro-physics of power[; it should] explore specific forms of [the exercise of power] in different institutional sites, and consider how, if at all, these were linked to produce broader and more persistent societal configurations. One should study power where it is exercised over individuals rather than legitimated at the centre; explore the actual practices of subjugation rather than the intentions that guide attempts at domination; and recognize that power circulates through networks”. (Jessop, 2007, p. 36)

These are very different situations – ongoing violence in one and a legacy of war in the other – but in spite of this, we show that our typification of (in)securitisation still holds value. Indeed, to strengthen the relevance to sociolinguistics, we dwell on the ways in which (in)securitisation can be entangled with language standardisation as another mode of governance, to the extent that at least in these two locations, an account of the latter would be inadequate *without* some grasp of the former.

But we must start with the historical sketch of sociolinguistics.

1. Sociolinguistics since the 1960s: A thumbnail sketch

Starting in the US and spreading rapidly to other countries, the 1960s-1980s were a formative period for contemporary Anglosphere sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics took linguistic diversity as its defining commitment, and the nation-state provided the main backdrop. For the most part, nation-states were seen to promote monolingual standard languages within their own borders, mainly through education and other public institutions, and as analysis moved down the social class hierarchy, it pointed to increasingly non-standard patterns of language use, using the term ‘linguistic insecurity’ to identify the uneasy self-consciousness experienced by people lower down the scale (e.g. Labov 1972:117-8). Immigrants increased the multilingualism within national borders, but the investigation of language shift suggested that over three generations, they would become monolingual in (some variety of) the main language of the host country. When going abroad to advise on the selection and development of local languages in post-colonial countries, sociolinguists generally supported standardisation (e.g. Cooper 1989), but at home, they tended to critique the nation-state’s emphasis on monolingual standards (a) for undermining vernacular dialects, neglecting their systematicity and eloquence (e.g. Labov 1969, 1972; Pride & Holmes (eds) 1972; Labov 1972; Trudgill (ed) 1978), and (b) for excluding the languages of indigenous and migrant minorities (e.g. Fishman 1972; LMP 1985). Overall, this sociolinguistics was strongly influenced by the ‘methodological nationalism’ underpinning much of the humanities and social sciences at that time (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002), and this also meant that there was very little sociolinguistic interest in ‘foreign’ languages (like French or German in the UK) (Rampton 2006:138-144), which were treated as topics for applied and educational linguistics.

The 1990s brought globalised neoliberal marketisation. States were redefined and many of their services were handed over to the private sector; walls, borders and boundaries gave way to flows of products, people and ideas (Deleuze 1992; Machado da Silva 2002); and in public culture, the consumer and the entrepreneur took over from the ideal of the literate citizen (Rose 1999; Fraser 2003). These changes affected linguistic diversity. Provision for indigenous minority languages increased with the support of local and regional government as well as supra-statal bodies like Council of Europe and UNESCO; cheap travel and digital communications facilitated language maintenance among migrant minorities; and commercial potential and glocal marketability joined heritage and educational measurability as major elements in the valuation of different languages (Pujolar 2008; Jacquemet 2005). Partly in step with this, sociolinguistic research interests moved beyond standardisation to the commodification of language (Duchêne, A. & M. Heller (eds) 2012;

Block et al 2012; Flubacher & Del Percio (eds) 2017), and the idea that languages like English or Portuguese were natural, unitary entities gave way to the view that named languages are ideological products, reworked for different purposes in different markets (Blommaert (ed) 1999; Heller 1999; Kroskrity (ed) 2000). As post-structuralist and practice perspectives gained hold, a host of other concepts – *inter alia* mother-tongue, speech community, language rights (e.g. Rampton 1998; Stroud 2001) – were critiqued for their essentialist underpinnings and reifying potential, and they were retheorised in more dynamic terms, generating talk of linguistic resources, translanguaging, superdiversification, linguistic citizenship (to name but a few). Indeed, the very identity of sociolinguistics itself changed over this period, as market and ‘practical impact’ pressures weakened disciplinary boundaries and sociolinguists started to engage seriously with other scholars in the humanities and social sciences in a growing climate of interdisciplinarity (Bernstein 1996; Gibbons et al 1994; Signorini 2002), producing much richer and more flexible accounts of the role that language and communication play in relations of power, in institutional relationships, in culture, ideology and consciousness (e.g. Fairclough 1989; Coupland & Jaworski 2009; Martín Rojo 2017). So although sociolinguists were often very critical of neoliberal marketisation and the reconfiguration of universities that this entailed (Chatterton & Goddard 2000; Goddard & Puukka 2008), they made some significant gains, at least in some respects.

So over the last 50 years, at least in the global North, language standardisation and the commodification of language have been major themes in sociolinguistics, reflecting researchers’ sensitivity to two salient and very influential modes of governance in the environments where most of them lived.⁴ Typically, standardisation and commodification have strong institutional bases in the state and economy driving their pervasiveness, but they certainly aren’t mutually exclusive as normative regimes influencing the use of language, and they are also often interwoven with a plurality of other ideologies and cultural schemes that shape and constrain relations and identities in households, voluntary associations, places of worship etc., as a rich sociolinguistic literature on language socialisation, language and gender, youth language and so forth has also amply documented. But there is another system of regulation, with substantial implications for sociolinguistic processes, that has received a lot less consideration, even though it has been hugely influential in the past and is now increasingly difficult to overlook, even in the oldest and wealthiest democracies. This is (in)securitisation, to which we should now turn, comparing it with language standardisation within a more explicitly Foucauldian theory of governance.

2. (In)securitisation as a mode of governance

Language standardisation has played a major role in the formation of European nation-states (Bourdieu 1991), not just as an emblem of national unity and heritage but also more routinely as an element in what Foucault calls ‘normalisation’, operating whenever language use becomes the focus of formal assessment (in exams, tests, interviews, applications and so forth). Normalisation “compares, differentiates, hierarchises, homogenises and excludes”

⁴ In Brazil, standardisation and its effects on citizen participation have been major concerns in sociolinguistics, while commodification has been a more marginal focus.

(Foucault 1977:182) by establishing “measurements, hierarchy, and regulations around the idea of a... statistical norm within a given population” (Ball 1990:2), and these then lead into ‘dividing practices’, splitting people into groups and categories, “achieving divisions and objectifications... either within the subject or between the subject and others” (Ball 1990:3). Normalisation is one central procedure in the large-scale operation of power in democratic societies, and it blends into the broader sphere of ‘biopolitics’, which refers to “the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life” (Foucault 1976:140), “governing populations through systematic monitoring and regulation of living organisms (e.g. demographics, health and hygiene, policing techniques)” (Zembylas 2021:417).

The description and standardisation of language has also played an important part in the organisation of colonial rule (cf e.g. Stroud 2008; Errington 2008; see §4 below), and of course colonies have also been intimately connected to the development of European modernity, providing a huge proportion of the material resources that fuelled it. Colonies, however, “are the location par excellence where the controls and guarantees of judicial order can be *suspended* – the zone where the violence of the *state of exception* is deemed to operate in the service of ‘civilization’” (Mbembe 2003:24; emphases added). “That colonies might be ruled over in absolute lawlessness”, adds Mbembe, “stems from the racial denial of any common bond between the conqueror and the native” (*ibid*), and Foucault concurs: “In a normalising society.... race or racism is the precondition that makes killing acceptable... Once the State functions in the biopower mode, racism alone can justify the murderous function of the State” (Foucault 1975-76:256; Mbembe 2003:17). In this context, argues Mbembe, “the notion of biopower is insufficient to account for... forms of subjugation of life to the power of death” (2003:39), and instead, he proposes the terms ‘necro-power’ and ‘necropolitics’.

Justified by racism, motivated by profit, enduring for centuries, and crucial in the global North’s material development, plantation slavery is a potent example of necro-power as a mode of governance (Mbembe 2003:21), and alongside a discussion of the prohibition of literacy among slaves, Gilroy characterises its communicative dynamics in the following terms:

The extreme patterns of communication defined by the institution of plantation slavery dictate that we recognize the anti-discursive and extralinguistic ramifications of power at work in shaping communicative acts.⁵ There may, after all, be no reciprocity on the plantation outside of the possibilities of rebellion and suicide, flight and silent mourning, and there is... no grammatical unity of speech to mediate communicative reason... The violent tenor of the slave’s life is manifested through the overseer’s disposition to behave in a cruel and intemperate manner and in the spectacle of pain inflicted on the slave’s body. Violence, here, becomes an element in manners. (Gilroy 1994:57, also cited in Mbembe 2003:21; see also Das 2007; Taussig 1987; Scarry 1985; Butler 1997; Briggs 2007; Silva 2017b)

⁵ Gilroy’s point about the “anti-discursive and extralinguistic ramifications of power” in plantation capitalism echoes some central claims in studies of violence and signification, namely that, when subjected to violence, “we reach some kind of limit in relation to the capacity to represent” (Das 2007:79) and that the violence of regimes of exception is “based on and nourished by silence” (Taussig 1987:8).

So language standardisation is obviously only one part of the sociolinguistic story of European nation-state formation. Standardisation was actually resourced by institutions that operated necropolitical regimes which, far from encouraging appropriately regulated standard speech, pushed towards silence and the negation of language, and this relied on much more than the (merely) ‘symbolic violence’ that Bourdieu describes in standard language settings (Bourdieu 1991:51-52 *et passim*; Burawoy & von Holdt 2012).⁶

In its focus on states of exception and governance through violence and (threats of) death, necropower is close to what we are calling (in)securitisation, a form of governmentality that operates through fear and suspicion (taking governmentality as a “deliberate attempt.. to shape conduct in certain ways in relation to certain objectives” (Rose 1999:4; Rose et al 2009)).⁷ Admittedly, it might be hard to make the case that sociolinguistics should give more consideration to this if plantation slavery were the only model for (in)securitisation/necropower.⁸ But necropolitical subjugation takes contemporary as well as historical forms, with Mbembe referring, for example, to the management of flows of refugees and to late-modern colonial occupation (as in Gaza and the West Bank). In addition, necro-power is exercised through a broad range of different techniques and practices (Mbembe 2003:29; Foucault 1975-76:256),⁹ and – crucially – it is also often mixed with other modes of governance in what Mbembe describes as a “combining of the disciplinary,¹⁰ the

⁶ Indeed much nearer to home in the development of national standard varieties in Europe, milder but still violent sociolinguistic regimes could be seen at work in, for example, the suppression of minority languages like Occitan, Breton and Welsh (see Heller and McEllhinny 2017: 94; Williams 2022:52-53; Silva forthcoming a).

⁷ In some readings of Foucault, necropower and (in)securitisation might count more as domination than governmentality: “to dominate is to ignore or to attempt to crush the capacity for action of the dominated. But to govern is to recognize that capacity for action....[T]o govern one must act upon these forces, instrumentalize them in order to shape actions, processes and outcomes in desired directions” (Rose 1999, p. 4). But Mbembe associates necropower with governmentality (2003:34), and this is especially useful when investigating (in)securitisation mixed with other modes of governance.

⁸ Detailed historical records of communicative practice under slavery are limited (McWhorter 1999:315) and this leaves analysis vulnerable to two of the sociolinguistic criticisms that Susan Gal levels at James Scott’s attempt, in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990), to map communication in extreme oppression. The social and political meaning of an utterance, Gal reminds us, is always shaped in part by the particular contingencies of the immediate situation in which it is produced (1995:420), and speculation from a historical distance can’t get at these. And complex social structures, as well as the powerful ideologies now circulating through mass media, can make sharp “lines of division between subordinate and dominant... impossible to draw” (1995:415-6). But both of these concerns are in fact addressed in Mbembe’s theorisation of necro-power. In fact, whereas Scott generally separates his own analyses of domination from Foucault’s, saying that a “great latitude for arbitrary and capricious conduct by the master” differentiates the sites he studies from the “impersonal domination by... “scientific techniques’, bureaucratic rules or market forces” in Foucault’s work (1990:21), necro-power brings them all into alignment as different forms of governmentality, suggesting that the master’s capricious rule is founded in a necro-political state of exception. Indeed, this necro-political framing also undermines Gal’s overall verdict on Scott’s account (“deeply flawed”) – contrary to her characterisation, Scott’s book doesn’t cover “familiar subject matter” and it isn’t just a study of “everyday power relations” and “everyday talk” (Gal 1995:407,408).

⁹ Foucault: “When I say ‘killing’, I obviously do not mean simply murder as such, but also every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, reaction, and so on” (1975-6:256). Mbembe elaborates with the following sketch of life under late modern occupation: “fortified structures, military posts, and roadblocks everywhere; buildings that bring back painful memories of humiliation, interrogations, and beatings; curfews that imprison hundreds of thousands in their cramped homes every night from dusk to day-break; soldiers patrolling the unlit streets, frightened by their own shadows; children blinded by rubber bullets; parents shamed and beaten in front of their families; soldiers urinating on fences, shooting at the rooftop water tanks just for fun, chanting loud offensive slogans, pounding on fragile tin doors to frighten the children, confiscating papers, or dumping garbage in the middle of a residential neighborhood; border guards kicking over a vegetable stand or closing borders at whim; bones broken; shootings and fatalities—a certain kind of madness” (2003:29).

¹⁰ “Discipline is a mechanism of power which regulates the behaviour of individuals in the social body. This is done by regulating the organisation of space (architecture etc.), of time (timetables) and people’s activity and behaviour (drills,

biopolitical, and the necropolitical” (2003:26). For our own purposes, ‘(in)securitisation’ is easier to use than the starker term ‘necro-power’. (In)securitisation as a mode of governance can account for blurred and shifting power relations; it can operate in varied and attenuated forms, sometimes mixed in with others; and it has interdisciplinary resonance (in our case, reflecting collaboration with researchers in Critical Security Studies. See McCluskey & Charalambous (eds) 2022). Even so, (in)securitisation’s alignment with necro-power underscores its colonial pedigree, spotlights the profound links with racialisation, and brings in a set of strong claims about the impact on language, not only suggesting that there are “anti-discursive and extralinguistic” pressures, but also arguing that political expression develops its opposition through “deliberately opaque means... played, danced, and acted, as well as sung and sung about” (Gilroy 1994:37; Scott 1990). These ideas certainly need to be nuanced empirically (see Gal’s 1995 critique of Scott; Footnote 8), and indeed in previous work, we have proposed a definition of (in)securitisation tuned to the sociolinguistic analysis of everyday interaction, characterising (in)securitisation as “an intensifying apprehension of institutionally authorised vulnerability and existential threat, produced (and received) in communicative practice in a range of social settings” (Rampton & Charalambous 2019:6). But the terrain where this develops deserves fuller specification, and a schematic comparison with standardisation and commodification can provide some prototypical coordinates for more detailed sociolinguistic investigations of (in)securitisation to look for – as well, perhaps, as making it easier for the reader to assess our claims about their relative prominence in the literature.

So, adding in some extra points of difference and recognising that in actuality they are likely to intermix as modes of governance, we can suggest that while standardisation and marketisation promote the identities of ‘trainer+literate citizen’ and ‘consumer+entrepreneur’ respectively, (in)securitisation attends to enemies, terrorists, traitors, ‘inferior races’ and the military; walls and fortifications take over from institutional ladders and market flows; the message ‘stay alert’ takes priority over ‘conform’ or ‘shine’; language serves as shibboleth and weapon, not just for measurement or profit; and silencing antagonists joins regulation and selling as a language ideological objective or effect. At the same time, (in)securitisation’s sociolinguistic materialisation is impossible to predict away from the empirical scenes in which it occurs, provoking any of (or maybe more than) the resistance strategies listed by Scott (1990),¹¹ multiplied by all the nuances that Gal (1995) draws attention to (Footnote 8).

At this point in our case for (in)securitisation’s significance, we should turn to some data, beginning with its historical contextualisation.

posture, movement). It is enforced with the aid of complex systems of surveillance. Foucault emphasizes that... discipline is simply one way in which power can be exercised. He also uses the term ‘disciplinary society’, discussing its history and the origins and disciplinary institutions such as prisons, hospitals, asylums, schools and army barracks” (O’Farrell 2021; see Foucault 1977)

¹¹ Scott (1990) lists four basic strategies of resistance: find space for concessions in the official rhetorics of the dominant; develop hidden oppositional discourses; speak with disguise, in anonymity or with double meaning in public; speak out.

3. Necropolitics and *Papo Reto's* counter-securitisation in a favela in Rio de Janeiro

Segurança pública, or public security, has been the main phrase used in institutional politics and in everyday speech to address the escalation of violent crime and insecurity in Brazil since the mid-1980s and 1990s (Adorno 2013; Caldeira 2000; Mesquita Neto 2011; Machado da Silva 1999; Zaluar 2004).¹² Since then, there have been a number of developments: successive economic crises both during and in the aftermath of the military dictatorship (1964-1985) and rising levels of unemployment and inequality resulting from neoliberal state reforms (Machado da Silva 2002); the intensification of transnational drug trafficking in Brazil and the consolidation of drug factions (Biondi 2016; Feltran 2011, 2018, 2020; Zaluar 2004); attempts to implement novel policing experiments such as police “pacification”, a program that since 2008 has installed permanent police units in some Rio de Janeiro favelas (Menezes 2015; Machado da Silva and Menezes 2019; Leite et al 2018; Grassiani and Muller 2019); the building of walls, real and symbolic, to segregate the (upper-) middle classes from ‘crime’ in fortified enclaves, gated communities and shopping malls (Caldeira 2000); repetitive, ‘contagious’ everyday talk of crime – “everyday conversations, commentaries, discussions, narratives, and jokes that have crime and fear as their subject [that....] exarcebate... violence by legitimizing private or illegal reactions – such as hiring guards or supporting death squads and vigilantism – when institutions of order seem to fail” (Caldeira 2000:19,20); and since 2019, a national executive led by Bolsonaro,¹³ who was elected for a conservative Christian agenda but above all for his ‘penal populism’ and law-and-order discourse (Pratt 2007).

Since 2012, Silva has been involved in ethnographic research and teaching in Complexo do Alemão, a group of twelve favelas located in the northern area of Rio de Janeiro. Favelas are neighborhoods self-built by their residents and they first formed in Rio after Brazil’s reluctant abolition of slavery in 1888,¹⁴ when in the absence of public policies to support them, freed enslaved people and their descendants had to find their own solutions to housing and income needs (Smith 2015; Valladares 2019). Beginning in the 1930s, they were joined by *Nordestinos* migrating from the north east of Brazil, the country’s poorest region, and favela residents now represent 22% of Rio’s population, being for the most part Black and poor in one of the world’s biggest and most unequal economies (Arretche 2018; Garmany and Pereira 2021).

Bringing this history and location together, our account begins with glimpses of how securitisation effects everyday communication in public spaces, turns to interactional expectations in encounters with police, and then moves to the resistance organised by *Papo Reto*, an activist collective that seeks to disrupt the local association of standard Portuguese with political exclusion.

¹² In 2020, 50,033 people were victims of murder in Brazil – a rate of 23.6 murders per 100,000 inhabitants (Pauluze 2021). In contrast, the United States registered in the same year 21,570 homicides (or 7.8 murders per 100,000 inhabitants) – a historic high, and yet a rate almost three times lower compared to Brazil (Gramlich 2021).

¹³ Bolsonaro is a former army member who was put into the reserve at the age of 33 because he had plotted a bombing in the army in an attempt to harm the image of then-army minister Leonidas Pires Gonçalves (see Carvalho 2019; Silva 2020). After retiring, Bolsonaro became a city councilman (1989) and then a federal deputy (1990-2018) with an almost zero record of legislative bills, but gradually consolidating himself as a cartoonish politician for his racist and misogynist stance, and for his public defence of torture, the military dictatorship’s regime of exception, and the *milícias* – groups of military officers who compete with the drug trade for controlling favelas, illegally extorting residents in exchange for “security.”

¹⁴ Brazil was the country that received the most enslaved people from Africa during the colonisation of the Americas (Marques 2019)

Since the 1980s, there has been an ongoing dispute (and occasional cooperation) between the state and the ‘world of crime’ over the monopoly of violence (Weber 1969) in the governance of territories, particularly in urban peripheries like Complexo do Alemão (Machado da Silva 1999). Even outside direct encounters, the anti-discursive effects of this are felt in experiences of surveillance,¹⁵ as attested on a sunny day in late spring of 2012, when Silva was in a group of six, interviewing Raphael Calazans, a young black activist and social work student, under an open sky strolling around one of the high points in the neighbourhood, from where one can see the immensity of the territory, its maze-like alleys and the typical self-built houses. The interview lasted two hours, but there were two occasions when the conversation faltered. This was the first, ten minutes after the start of the interview:

Excerpt 1: Interview with Raphael Calazans, November 11, 2012 ¹⁶

01 Verissimo você tem quantos irmãos, Raphael?
 02 Calazans sou eu e mais três
 03 Verissimo você e mais três (.)
 04 e você foi o único que teve trajetória escolar?
 05 Calazans é, na verdade, assim (.) um irmão meu morreu né? (.)
 06 o outro:: começou uma época assim a estudar à noite (.)
 07 e aí:: ((he looks at the motorcycle that has just been
 08 started up; his expression changes, indicating concern))
 09 e aí:: é::
 10 (3.0)
 11 ((the motorcyclist rides past the group)) depois da noite
 12 (2.0)
 13 ((he looks at the motorcycle, which has already moved
 14 past the group))
 15 ah, deixa só eu interromper, gente (.)
 16 é que tá cheio de olheiro na favela, é que tá acontecendo
 17 algumas coisas aqui, principalmente com alguns moradores
 18 ((the research group realizes what is going on and Romulo
 19 decides to turn the camera off))

01 Verissimo how many brothers do you have, Raphael?
 02 Calazans it's me and other three
 03 Verissimo you and other three (.)
 04 are you the only one with a trajectory of schooling?
 05 Calazans yeah, actually (.) one of my brothers died (.)
 06 the other one::: started studying at night (.)
 07

¹⁵ For a theorisation of interactional experience of surveillance, see Rampton & Eley 2018 and Eley & Rampton 2020.

¹⁶ We have utilized Jefferson Transcription Conventions throughout:

- (.) A micropause
- (()) Analyst comments
- Underlining A raise in volume or emphasis
- A cut-off
- :: Stretched sound
- [] Overlapping talk
- (0.7) A timed pause, long enough to indicate a time
- = No pause between sentences.

08 and then:: yeah:: ((he looks at the motorcycle that has
 09 just been started up; his expression changes, indicating
 10 concern))
 11 (3.0)
 12 ((the motorcyclist rides past the group)) after the
 13 night:: (2.0)
 14 ((he looks at the motorcycle, which has already moved
 15 past the group))
 16 ah, let me just interrupt, folks (.)
 17 it's that there's many lookouts in the favela, and some
 18 things are happening here, mainly with some residents
 19 ((the group realises what is going on and Romulo decides
 to turn the camera off))

Calazans then told them that they had been watched by a lookout working for drug-traffickers. But there was no comfort from a police presence either, and about half an hour later, a passing police car had a similar effect on Calazans's speech. The conversation had turned to the resumption of funk parties after a period in which they had been banned (as part of the police campaign of "pacification"), and just at the point where Adriana asked him a question about 'intermediation' (line 10),¹⁷ Calazans was distracted once again (11-17):

Excerpt 2: Interview with Raphael Calazans, November 11, 2012

1 Calazans a importância desse baile voltar foi assim como
 2 um sopro
 3 até pra gente mesmo daqui, entendeu? (.)
 4 pô, o cara conseguiu lá então ((to have the party
 5 authorized)) ((enacting the organisers' talk)) "vamo colar
 6 no [DJ] Bianco lá,
 7 vamo ver como é que ele fez pra tentar trazer pra cá
 8 também
 9 essa [experiência"
 10 Adriana [ah tá, foi ele intermediou alguma coisa?
 11 Calazans ((the police drives slowly past the group, and
 12 Calazans follows the vehicle with his head))
 13 não, foi só pelo (.)
 14 (2.0)
 15 por ele mesmo assim de::
 16 (2.0)
 17 comprar o barulho
 18 Adriana olha, eu queria te perguntar (.) ((Adriana notices
 19 Calazans' concern and looks at the police car))
 20 que é isso? uma hora de cá, uma hora de lá
 21 ((laughs))

1 Calazans the importance of this party being back was like
 2 breathing,
 3 even for us here, right? (.)
 4 see, the dude found a way there ((to have the party
 5 authorized)) ((enacting the organisers' talk)) "so let's
 6 stick to [DJ] Bianco there,
 7 let's see what he made and we can try to do it here as
 8 well,
 9 this [experience"

¹⁷ It is not exactly clear what Adriana means by this.

10 Adriana [oh, did he intermediate anything?
 11 Calazans ((the police drives slowly past the group, and
 12 Calazans follows the vehicle with his head))
 13 no, it was only for (.) ((original: não, só foi pelo))
 14 (2.0)
 15 it was his::
 16 (2.0)
 17 buying the noise
 18 Adriana hey, I'd like to ask you (.) ((Adriana notices Calazans'
 19 concern and looks at the police car))
 20 what is it? one time it's from here, now it's from there
 21 ((laughs))

There was a fuller account of the part that police played in the non-dialogical dynamics of armed control over favelas during a focus group discussion at Vila Cruzeiro, a favela bordering the Complexo do Alemão in January 2013. Luan, a young participant from a middle-class neighbourhood posed a question:

Excerpt 3a: Focus group with young favela residents and Rio activists, January 2013

1 a gente ouve muito relato acerca de::
 2 como a polícia, né, numa favela com UPP instalada, ela é::
 3 lidar de uma forma muito dura com por exemplo
 4 um churrasco na laje
 5 que tem um som alto, ou um pastor,
 6 ou jogar videogame ou ver um futebol,
 7 e eu queria saber::< [...]
 8 se vocês conhecem alguém que já levou uma du::ra,
 9
 10 se o cara manda descer e acabou

1 we hear a lot of reports about::
 2 how the police, in a favela with a Police Pacifying Unit installed,
 3 deal very harshly ((original: forma muito dura)) with, for example,
 4 a barbecue on the laje ((flat concrete roof))
 5 with loud music, or a pastor,
 6 or playing videogames or watching soccer
 7 and I would like to know::w [...]
 8 if you know anyone who has already been hassled by the cops ((alguém
 9 que já levou uma dura)),
 10 if the officer tells them to get down and that's it

Duro (fem. *dura*) means hard in Portuguese and *dura* is a slang term meaning a violent approach, both verbally (i.e., being reprimanded) and physically (i.e., being frisked and/or beaten up), so *levar uma dura* (line 8) translates as “undergo a *dura*”, to be harshly or violently approached by the police. Mateus, a local resident, responded:

Excerpt 3b

11 domingo agora eu tava na loja onde eu trabalho, numa doceria,
 12 tava conversando com o meu patrão (.)
 13 começou a dar uns tiros,
 14 todo mundo correu pra loja (.)

15 passaram um grupo de policiais e pararam na esquina (.)
16 aí meu patrão começou a brincar com o pessoal da loja
17 e eu comecei a rir (.)
18 nisso o último da fila me viu rindo
19 e já veio com a ar- com o fuzil apontado pra minha cara,
20 em minha direção,
21 me xingando, gritando alto, é::
22 me perguntando por que eu tava rindo (.)
23 e nisso eu já tô cercado,
24 nisso já tô com o fuzil na minha cara (.)
25 e se não fosse o meu patrão para intervir, eu já tava sendo (.)
26 é:: espancado, já tava sendo levado pra um beco e morto

11 on Sunday I was in the store where I work, in a candy store,
12 I was talking to my boss (.)
13 gunshots broke out,
14 everybody ran to the store (.)
15 a group of cops passed by and stopped at the corner (.)
16 then my boss began joking with the people from the store
17 and I started laughing (.)
18 and then the last one in line saw me laughing
19 and came with a rifle pointed at my face,
20 in my direction,
21 cursing me, shouting loudly, yeah::
22 asking me why I was laughing (.)
23 and now I'm already surrounded,
24 now I already have the rifle in my face (.)
25 and if it wasn't for my boss to intervene, I would have been (.)
26 beaten up, taken to the alley and killed¹⁸

The next day, others told him that they had also endured *duras* over comparably ordinary activities:

Excerpt 3c

27 e assim, depois que o pessoal viram, no outro dia
28 já estavam contando
29 "ah, isso já aconteceu comigo,
30 outro dia eu tava soltando pipa,
31 é:: eu tava furando uma luz pra botar no terraço
32 e me deram uma dura"

27 after the people saw it, the next day
28 they were saying
29 "ah, this has already happened to me,
30 the other day I was flying a kite,
31 I was drilling a spot on the terrace for a lamp
32 and they approached me aggressively ((*me deram uma dura*))" (...)

And Mateus concluded with metacommunicative comments about police training:

Excerpt 3d

¹⁸ Later, in June 2013, Amarildo de Souza, a Black bricklayer who lived in favela da Rocinha, was approached by 'pacification' police officers and never appeared again, a case that sparked national commotion as it was incorporated into the mottos against police violence during the mega-protests of 2013 (see Duncan 2021; Rocha 2016).

33 então, assim, eles vêm com muita agressividade (.)
34 o modo deles verem é diferente (.)
35 não passam pra eles:
36 "olha, você tá indo pra um local que é assim,
37 você tem que ter paciência,
38 tem que conversar e ter aquele diálogo com as pessoas" (.)
39 não tem (.)
40 eles vêm, "chega lá, vai ser assim e assim e pronto",
41 sem conversa, sem nada

33 so, they come very aggressively (.)
34 their way of seeing things is different (.)
35 they are not told:
36 "look, you are going to a place that is like this,
37 you have to be patient,
38 you have to talk and have that dialog with the people" (.)
39 they don't have (.)
40 they come, "hey, it's going to be like this, and that's it",
41 without conversation, without anything

Luan then asked whether other participants had had similar experiences, and Luiza, Mario, Fabiana and Verissimo explained:

Excerpt 3e

42 Luiza todo mundo é suspeito=
43 Luan ((Luan laughs)) =é [verdade
45 Luiza [na comunidade, se é homem é
46 suspeito, se é mulher é objeto sexual, [é assim que é
47 enxergado=
48 Daniel [uhum
49 Mario =mas é assim a
50 [visão deles
51 Luiza [é:: a mulher passa, "ah é gostosa, é safada"
52 Fabiana você tem que aguentar tudo calado, [você tem que aguentar
53 tudo calado
54 Luiza [é um objeto sexual,
55 "aquela mulher não vale nada", se for jovem é um suspeito
56 Mateus se passa com uma [blusa maior
57 Verissimo [se for jovem, então=
58 Luiza =se for jovem, então=
59 Mateus =é [cracudo
60 Luiza [vai ser um traficante, ou um usuário (.)
61 com certeza, é um projeto
62 Mario isso
63 Luiza um vagabundo ou sei lá o que eles vão te chamar

42 Luiza everyone is suspect=
43 Luan ((Luan laughs)) =that's [true
45 Luiza [in the community, if it's a man it's suspect, if it's a
46 woman it's a sex object, [that's how it's seen=
47
48 Daniel [uh-huh
49 Mario =but that's
50 [their view
51 Luiza [yeah:: a woman walks, "ah, she's hot, she's slutty"

52 Fabiana you've got to bear it all quietly, [you've got to listen
53 quietly
54 Luiza [it's a sex object,
55 "that woman is worthless", if it's man it's a suspect
56 Mateus if a guy has a [long shirt
57 Verissimo [if he's young, then=
58 Luiza =if he's young, then=
59 Mateus =he's a crack [addict
60 Luiza [it's going to be a dealer, or a drug user
61 (.) for sure, it's a project
62 Mario right
63 Luiza a vagrant or God knows what they're going to call them

As described by Caldeira and others (2000; Scheper-Hughes 1992; Silva 2012, 2017a), widespread talk of crime essentialises the criminals (*criminosos*) as Black and *Nordestinos*, and in line 42, Luiza notes the result – “everyone is suspect”. After that, Fabiana’s remark, “you’ve got to bear it all quietly, you’ve got to listen quietly” (lines 52-53) invites at least two (linked) lines of elaboration. First, as many have observed (e.g. Eilbaum and Medeiros 2016; Leite and Oliveira 2005; Menezes 2015; Savell 2021), the police, *milícias* and drug dealers impose a ‘code of silence’ on *favelados*, which “impedes the continuity of residents’ routines and hinders the public manifestation of their demands” (Machado da Silva and Menezes 2019: 530). Second, living in a favela requires permanently alert monitoring and calculation of the risks involved in talk and conduct. Residents inhabit what Machado da Silva and Menezes call a ‘minefield’¹⁹, with a strong sense of apprehension, especially during police ‘pacification’, that behaviour could be framed by drug dealers or police officers as ‘inappropriate’ – as snitching on a dealer or criticising the police – with consequences that reach far beyond the loss of face (Goffman 1967) to “losing one’s life” (Machado da Silva and Menezes 2019:542).²⁰ Finally, Luiza concludes this collaborative account with recognition that all this is a deliberate mode of governance – “for sure, it’s a project” (line 61).

The data so far lend broad support to Hannah Arendt’s comment about talk, violence and politics: “violence begins where speech ends” (1994: 38). But local residents also developed communicative practices and imaginings of language to promote projects of *counter*-securitisation. The *Coletivo Papo Reto* (‘Straight Talk Collective’), for example, was formed in Complexo do Alemão in 2014 by a group of activists with a human rights agenda that includes denouncing police abuses and valorising local ways of life. *Papo reto* is a common metapragmatic term in Rio de Janeiro’s non-standard Portuguese, and in the favela, *dar um papo reto* (to give a straight talk) means to communicate something in the most direct way, usually with non-standard language suspending expectations of face (see Silva and Lee 2021; Silva 2022).

¹⁹ In her ethnography in two ‘pacified’ favelas, Palloma Menezes noticed a constant tension among residents in talking about violence (with her, an “outsider”, but also with neighbours), given the potential risk that this talk could travel to either the police or the drug trade and yield retaliations. She explains that “in this tense space where everyone became potentially monitored, a permanent fear spread that these banal acts [such as talking about violence] would produce a ‘contamination’ that could in turn lead to a critical situation (such as a *dura* or a *desenrola*). While these critical moments can be ‘overcome’, there is always the risk of them having a violent outcome, which may involve anything from humiliation to serious beatings by both drug dealers and police officers” (Machado da Silva and Menezes 2019: 541-542).

²⁰ In 2019, Black males were 74.4% of the victims of violent lethality and 79.1% of the victims of murders caused by the police in Brazil (see Bueno et al 2020).



Figure 1 – Coletivo Papo Reto activists (@CPapo_Reto, July 8, 2021)

Some of the collective’s members can be seen in Figure 1 (clockwise from top left: Lana Souza, Raull Santiago, Renata Trajano, Thainã Medeiros, Ananda Trajano, and Bento Fábio), and the central caption reads: “Quem faz o papo reto acontecer,” or “Who makes the straight talk happen.” And in this image, circulated in the collective’s Twitter profile, the activists creatively scramble the line between vernacular and official discourse by declaring their *Papo Reto* identity in the paradigmatic genre of language standardisation, the dictionary entry,²¹ printing this on the most basic and unpretentious item of everyday dress, the T-shirt. This text reads:

Excerpt 4: Definition of *papo reto* on the activists’ T-shirt (@CPapo_Reto, July 8, 2021)

PA.PO RE.TO
[gíria popular]

1. Aquele ou aquela que se posiciona de maneira objetiva; 2. Atitude de quem não enrola; 3. Aqueles ou aquelas que não são fãs de canalhas; 4. Coletivo de comunicação e direitos humanos que atua no Complexo do Alemão.

PA.PO RE.TO
[popular slang]

1. A person who positions himself or herself objectively; 2. An attitude of someone who doesn't deceive; 3. Those who are not fans of scoundrels; 4. A collective of communication and human rights that is active in Complexo do Alemão.

²¹ *Papo reto* is not a common entry in Portuguese dictionaries.

At a 2019 public meeting, promoted by Agencia Solano Trindade and Radio Mixtura, held in a peripheral district in São Paulo and attended by participants that included favela residents, Raul Santiago explained the Collective's formation, rationale and strategy. Raul began his 1.5 hour lecture, followed by discussion with the public, by saying that in addition to "favelado, ativista de direitos humanos e mobilizador de favela" ('favela resident, human rights activist and favela mobiliser'), he liked to define himself as "empendedor da palavra" ('entrepreneur of words'). In this introduction, "eu nasci com o dom de falar, eu falo pra caralho" ('I was born with the gift of speech, I'm fucking talkative'), with the use of slang and suspension of conventional politeness announcing from the outset that his talk would be enunciated in a *papo reto* register. Portraying himself as a graduate in "Ruologia" ('Streetology'), with a postgraduate degree in "Ciências Periféricas" ('Peripheral Sciences'), he stressed that his political literacy comes not from universities but from the street and the periphery. Embodying this persona, Raul then performed his talk in a poetics similar to the style of rappers and pastors, with a fast rhythm of enunciation and few pauses. Here is an excerpt of his talk:

Excerpt 5: Raul Santiago at the Perifa Talks, 2019 (translated from the original)

1 a principal política pública que chega para nós
2 o amplo investimento ainda é o da violência contra o nosso povo
3 vindo como discurso de política de segurança
4 uma segurança pública que não inclui a nós,
5 moradores e moradoras de favelas
6 como pessoas que têm o direito à garantia de segurança
7 mas são vistos como inimigos de uma ideia de segurança pública
8 que na prática é privada
9 tem quem paga (.)
10 e aí nessas construções
11 eu comecei a perceber que (.)
12 a violência só crescia no Complexo do Alemão (.)
13 por mais que a gente tentava denunciar
14 a gente era criminalizado (.)
15 se as pessoas se juntavam para fazer um protesto em uma via de acesso
16 a- a- a imprensa vinha
17 discursava que aquele protesto era a mando do crime organizado
18 a polícia era a única voz final a falar sobre aquele momento
19 nunca era a nossa voz como a voz final
20 como a voz central de algo
21 e aí nada dava certo (.)
22 só que
23 depois quando a gente começou acessar internet
24 e ter a possibilidade de ter melhores equipamentos
25 como um bom celular
26 eu comecei a tentar registrar isso o máximo possível
27 então a gente se juntou e começou a monitorar
28 "vamos acompanhar a violência
29 vamos acompanhar como isso acontece dentro do Complexo do Alemão" (...)
30 o Coletivo Papo Reto ele surge no Complexo do Alemão
31 com o intuito de (.)
32 ser papo reto
33 ou seja, falar de violência
34 falar o que a gente vive de nós pra nós primeiramente
35 e depois de nós para fora
36 ou seja, organizar as pessoas a não aceitarem
37 que a principal política pública pro preto

38 pro pobre
39 pro favelado
40 pra pessoa que vive na nossa realidade
41 seja a violência do Estado como a regra

1 the main public policy that comes to us
2 the main investment is still violence against our people
3 coming as a security policy discourse
4 a public security that doesn't include us,
5 favela residents
6 as people who have the right to the guarantee of security
7 but are seen as enemies of an idea of public security
8 that in practice is private
9 with someone paying for it (.)
10 and then in these constructions
11 I began to notice that (.)
12 violence was only growing in Complexo do Alemão (.)
13 no matter how hard we tried to denounce it
14 we were criminalized (.)
15 if people got together to make a protest in an access road to- to-
16 the press would come
17 and say that the protest was orchestrated by organized crime
18 the police were the only final voice to speak about that moment
19 it was never our voice as the final voice
20 as the central voice of something
21 and nothing worked out (.)
22 but then
23 when we started to have access to the internet
24 and to have the possibility to have better equipment
25 like a good cell phone
26 I started to try to record this as much as possible
27 so we got together and started to monitor
28 "let's follow the violence
29 let's follow how this happens inside Complexo do Alemão" (...)
30 the Coletivo Papo Reto emerged in the Complexo do Alemão
31 with the intention of (.)
32 being *papo reto* ((*straight talk*))
33 that is, to talk about violence
34 to talk about how we live from us to ourselves first
35 and then from us to the outside
36 that is, to try to organize people to not accept
37 that the main public policy for the Blacks
38 for the poor
39 for favela residents
40 for the people that live in our reality
41 is state violence as the rule

Papo Reto defied the code of silence and the official accounts of police and press, appropriating the power of representation with digital media and the internet, using 'sousveillance' (surveillance from below) to monitor and expose the violence (lines 22-29; cf Jones 2020). The private interests at play in 'pacification' policies were recognised (ll.8-9)²² – the "invisible hand" of the market" operating in tandem with "the 'iron fist' of the penal state" (Wacquant 2012:76) – but *Papo Reto* worked with video and social media to form a

²² See e.g. Gaffney 2013 and Silva, Lopes and Facina 2015 on the business interests (including real estate and media investments for the 2013-2016 mega-events) that have stakes in the Brazilian securitisation, and Grassiani and Muller 2019 on the involvement of the transnational weapons industry.

range of alternative alliances, locally (with other collectives in Complexo do Alemão like *Raízes em Movimento* and *Voz das Comunidades*), nationally (with *Fogo Cruzado* and other participants at the Perifa Talks) and internationally (with BrazilFoundation and Witness, a New York City-based NGO invested in helping “human rights defenders use video to expose injustice” (Witness 2021)). All of this was guided by *nós por nós* (‘us for/by ourselves’), a major contemporary activist trope in the Brazilian peripheries (Fabricio and Melo 2020: 1885), and “in talking from us to ourselves first and then from us to the outside” (lines 34-35), the mediational role of *papo reto* as a discursive style and as an emblem was crucial. As symbolised in its dictionary entry T-shirt inscription, *papo reto* pushed for wider recognition and understanding; it deconstructed and opened up the public debates conducted in standardized bureaucratic language (Silva & Lee 2020:14,15); and without masking its identity as the voice of “the people that live in our reality” (l. 40), it mixed with the global English of international organisations.²³

Fuller sociolinguistic analysis could certainly complicate and enrich this account (see e.g. Silva 2022, forthcoming a), but these empirical fragments should be sufficient to show favela residents having to contend with conditions close to the necropolitical states of exception sketched in the previous section: rule through violence and death, racialisation, suspicion, fear and constant alertness, and policies and practices in which obedient silence is a central stake in tense (language ideological) struggle. At the same time, collectives like *Papo Reto* orient to a progressive Latin American conception of ‘citizen security’ that connects “to the United Nation’s definition of ‘human security’ as that which protects human freedoms – ‘freedoms that are the essence of life’ (UN Commission on Human Rights 2003: Chapter 1)” (Silva 2014; Mesquita Neto 2011). And in resisting this coercive exceptionalisation and its portrayal of local people as “enemies of an idea of public security” (Ex.5, l.7), their political strategy operates at the nexus of counter-securitisation and language ideology, refusing the equation of political voice with standard Portuguese, insisting on inclusion without relinquishing their sociolinguistic identity.

The next set of examples shifts the focus to Greek-Cypriot secondary classrooms, where conflict is now less acute, violence is more remote and students submit to schooled standard language learning. Even so, the logic of (in)securitisation derived from the island’s history produces threatening counter-currents that demand deft navigation from all of the participants.

4. De-securitisation in Turkish language classes at Greek Cypriot secondary school

The roots of the conflict between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots are usually traced to the period of the British Administration (1878-1960), when standard language and literacy had an important role in the two communities’ ethnolinguistic self-imagining, embracing distinct (and subsequently hostile) identities. During Ottoman Rule of the island (1571-1878), people had been categorised according to their religion (‘millets’), but the new British administration classified citizens according to their ‘native languages’ (Bryant, 2004). Religious leaders lost their traditional power as representatives of their community, and

²³ See e.g. <https://www.witness.org/coletivo-papo-reto-combating-police-violence-in-brazil/>

instead, communication with the new authorities was achieved through petitions and other documents completed in the notional 'native tongues' of each community, which were construed as standard Greek and Ottoman/Turkish rather than the local Cypriot dialects, even though most of the population didn't understand either of these official varieties (Bryant, 2004; Karoulla-Vriki, 2004). This created the need for wider literacy and education, which brought people into contact with the 'high cultures' of the mainlands and increased their awareness of the nationalist discourses in each (Bryant, 2004; Pollis, 1998). In the case of younger Greek-Cypriots, these then inspired anti-colonial struggles seeking unification with Greece, while Turkish-Cypriots "adopt[ed] the ideology of Turkish nationalism, first in order to fight against the union of Cyprus with Greece, and then, in order to achieve the division of Cyprus and unify her [sic] with Turkey" (Kizilyurek & Gautier- Kizilyurek 2004: 41).

By the second half of the 20th century, education and other nation-building processes had solidified ethnolinguistic boundaries, and when the Cyprus Republic was founded in 1960, it was a bicomunal and bilingual state, with little sense of shared identity and two systems of mono-communal, mono-lingual education. As early as 1963 constitutional troubles led to intercommunal violence and a few years later, a pro Greek coup overthrew the legal president of the Republic (1974). A week after that, a violent military intervention by the Turkish army led to war and the occupation of the northern third of the island, with large-scale migration in both directions, and from that time until 2003, the two communities were divided by borders and a UN patrolled buffer zone, communication between the two parts being almost impossible. On the northern Turkish-speaking side, Greek was erased from road signs, names of villages and so forth, emphasising the independence of Turkish-Cypriots (Killoran, 2000). In the Government controlled areas (the southern Greek-speaking part), Turkish continued to have recognised status in e.g. official documents, coins and banknotes, supporting the argument that the Republic of Cyprus was functioning unaltered, with its jurisdiction suspended in the 'occupied areas'. But learning Turkish was restricted to espionage, police and diplomats, and education remained monolingual, emphasising standard Greek and Hellenocentric ideals, attaching little value to the local Cypriot variety and identity. In general in both communities, learning and using the language of 'the other' was seen as a betrayal towards one's nation (Ozerk 2001).

In 2003, however, there were important changes in the political scene. The Republic of Cyprus sought to enter the European Union and to re-imagine Cypriot identity within an open transnational market, which could include Turkish Cypriots as well. In the midst of political negotiations for signing the EU accession treaty and for finding a resolution to the so-called Cyprus Issue, the Turkish-Cypriot authorities decided to lift the restriction of movement across the buffer zone, and to allow communication between Greek- and Turkish- Cypriots for the first time in nearly three decades. The (Greek) Cypriot government responded with a Package of Measures of Support to Turkish Cypriots that aimed to ensure their rights as European citizens, and among these measures, as an emblematic reconciliatory gesture, the Turkish language was to be offered to Greek-Cypriots as an optional foreign language (Charalambous 2019; Charalambous P. et al 2017), alongside policies for intercultural education and the cultivation of a European identity.

This historical sketch provides a glimpse of different political imaginings and modes of governance shaping the processes of nation building and identity formation, together with

the important role of language: the ethnic divisions produced by the colonial bureaucracy's language classifications; their intensification through education oriented to standard language in different 'motherlands'; the securitisation of linguistic difference following the war; and most recently, European marketisation and the incentive to reconciliation. But as each one of these political configurations developed, it did not replace the others but instead became entangled with them (e.g. Philippou & Theodorou 2014), creating new dynamics and different linguistic uses and indexicalities, exposing everyday communicative practice to potentially competing and/or conflicting expectations of conduct and visions of Cyprus and Cypriotness. So in one of the main sites that we have investigated, contemporary Greek-Cypriot public education, students experienced the processes of standardisation, measurement, hierarchisation and division that Foucault associates with normalisation (see §2 above), while at the same time, schooling (textbooks, curricula, school celebrations/commemorations) was also a site for perpetuating images of the Turk's hostile otherness as an enemy, teaching the 'emotional styles' associated with insecurity and war (Spyrou 2006; Zembylas et al 2014; 2016). In Greek-Cypriot secondary schools, this mixture made the post-2003 introduction of the Turkish language a complicated and precarious process (see Charalambous 2012; 2013; Charalambous et al 2021; Rampton et al 2019).²⁴

At secondary school, Turkish classes were incorporated in the foreign language curriculum as one option in a list of seven²⁵, part of the European plurilingual policy of 'mother tongue plus 2'. Students gave us a range of different reasons for selecting this option, but the most frequent referred to the exigencies of school normalisation itself – because of the similarities between the Cypriot dialects of Turkish and Greek, Turkish was supposed to be an easy language, putatively guaranteeing high grades ('it's more for the marks and for the fact that it's an easy language') (cf Rampton et al 2019:639-641). But Turkish was still indexically associated with conflict and hostility, and Greek-Cypriot teachers and learners of Turkish were often called traitors, being compelled either to justify this option choice to others, or to conceal it by e.g. hiding their books.

To circumvent this hostility, one strategy was to reposition Turkish within the neoliberal European discourse of plurilingualism as potential economic and cultural resource, rather than as a local language capable of contributing to reconciliation by improving intercommunal communication (Charalambous 2019). This could be seen in certain policy texts, as well as in the pedagogy of one of the teachers participating in our research, who tried to tie Turkish to a cosmopolitan rather than a local outlook (Charalambous et al 2017). But the most widespread pedagogic strategy was to 'depoliticise' the language by focusing exclusively on grammar and vocabulary, cutting it off from its *cultural* associations (see also Rampton et al 2019). For the most part, this succeeded in keeping culture and politics out of the classroom, but the grammar studied was Turkish standardised in Turkey, and this could

²⁴ The data here draws on two linguistic ethnographic projects initiated by Constadina Charalambous: the first was carried out between 2005-2009 (funded by King's College School of Social Sciences and Public Policy); the second one was conducted together with Ben Rampton & Panayiota Charalambous (2012-2015, funded by Leverhulme Trust). In 2006, data collection involved 53 hours of observation and 25.5 hours of audio-recording in 4 classes in an urban state school (3 secondary and 1 adult, with 58 students and 2 teachers), supplemented by c. 20 interviews with 30 students, 4 teachers and some ministry officials and the collection of related documents (textbooks, curricula and other government texts). In 2012, it involved 146 hours of observation and 84 hours of audio-recording in 6 secondary and 2 adult classes (116 students, 4 teachers), in two urban and one rural state schools, where there were also c. 40 interviews with 77 students and 5 teachers, complemented by document collection and 93 questionnaires.

²⁵ The rest included Italian, Spanish, English, French, German, Russian

complicate attempts to handle the kinds of issue commonly associated with a standard language (formality/ informality, high and low status), potentially reigniting political sensitivities. We can see Mr A trying to manage this in the following episode, in which he raises the question of formality in Turkish:

Extract 6 (2006)

1 MrA ((*talking about the 'question suffix' - mi*))
2 έτσι για να ξέρετε όμως (.)
3 Οι Τουρκοκύπριοι δεν το βαζουν
4 Δηλαδή μιλάμε (.) την επίσημη γλώσσα στην τάξη
5 Ο Τουρκοκύπριος θα το πει έτσι "Ali?" {*is it Ali?*}[...]
6 αν πείτε το '-mi' θα σας πουν ότι είσαστε (.)
7 Κωνσταντινοπολίτες ((*he laughs*))
8 Αυτό το λεν οι μορφωμένοι

1 MrA ((*talking about the 'question suffix' - mi*))
2 just so that you know though (.)
3 the Turkish-Cypriots do not use it
4 I mean we speak (.) the formal official language in the classroom
5 the Turkish-Cypriot will say "Ali?" {*is it Ali?*}[...]
6 if you add the '-mi' they will say that you are (.)
7 Constantinopolitans ((*he laughs*))
8 that's what the educated people

In the 29 hours that we observed him, this was only one of four occasions when MrA referred to Turkish speakers (see Exx 7 & 8 for two more). On the other occasion, when another point of grammar prompted him to refer to politeness among Turkish-speakers, there was an intense negative reaction from the students (see Charalambous 2014; Rampton & Charalambous 2016), and more generally, students 'colluded' with the teacher in suppressing the social and cultural elements of the language during the lesson, only talking about communication with Turkish speakers outside or in the periphery of the main floor of classroom interaction (in whispered talk, interviews, discussions before/after the lesson; Charalambous 2012; forthcoming). Outside the classes, the word 'Turk' itself was quite often used as an insult, and it is significant that it is Turkish-Cypriots, often seen as more 'similar to us' than Turks, the arch-enemies and invaders, that MrA identifies in Extract 6 (lines 3 & 5). Indeed, as his elaboration continues, MrA refers to 'educated *people*' rather than the educated *Turks* who actually use the form they are learning in class (line 8), and in speaking of 'Constantinopolitans' (line 7), he invokes the Byzantine Greek identity of Istanbul, allowing those learning 'correct' Turkish to sustain a sense of Greekness.

The historic securitisation of Turkish also complicated commonsense commentary on language learning, as can be seen in Extracts 7 and 8, where MrA navigates the idea that it helps to learn a language by interacting with its speakers:

Extract 7 (fieldnotes, 2006)

Mr A: Παιδιά, πρέπει να διαβάζετε γιατί δυστυχώς δεν έχουμε εδώ Τούρκους για να μπορούμε να κάνουμε practice

MrA: Children, you have to study because unfortunately there are no Turks over here so that we can practice ((*he goes on with the exercise sheets*))

This was factually inaccurate: after the border gates opened in 2003, there were Turkish-Cypriots coming to the south part of Cyprus to work or shop etc, and in interview, many students mentioned encounters with Turkish-Cypriots as a reason for learning the language. Several days later, MrA acknowledged this:

Extract 8 (fieldnotes, 2006)

Mr: Δεν μπορείς να μάθεις μια γλώσσα χωρίς διάβασμα εκτος και αν ζεις με άτομα που την μιλούν. Για παράδειγμα μαθαίνεις Αγγλικά σαν ζεις στην Αγγλία. Εμείς στην χώρα μας ((*παυση*)) έχουμε μεν Τουρκοκύπριους αλλά δεν έχουμε επαφή μαζί τους ((*καμία αντίδραση από μαθητές*)) Το λοιπόν, πώς θα πούμε τώρα «δες με»

Mr A: You can't learn a language without studying it unless you live with people who speak it. For example you learn English while living in England. We...in our country ((*pause*)) well we do have Turkish-Cypriots but we do not have contact with them. ((*pause*)) ((*no reply from students*)) Ok now how can we say "look at me"

Turkish-language classes had been set up to try to bring the two communities closer, but here Mr A construed/conceded an absence of interaction as the social norm. Indeed, none of the students challenged him, even though some of them did actually interact with Turkish-Cypriots outside school. In interview, MrA spelled out the state of exception that motivated this restricted account of the possibilities: "because we are under occupation students cannot interact with Turkish-Cypriots. If things were different they could go over there and use the vocabulary we learn in the classroom" (18/12/06). Closely attuned to the logic of securitisation, schooled study was as far as they could venture with Turkish in MrA's view, and a similar sensitivity both to the connotations of 'Turk' and the acceptability of studying as a (limited) mode of engagement shows up in Extract 9, involving one of the teachers in our 2012 research:

Extract 9 (B2 class, 16.11.12)

- | | | |
|---|----------|---|
| 1 | Teacher: | Ο Παναγιώτης να διαβάσει το κείμενο |
| 2 | Student: | Τούρκε |
| 3 | Teacher: | Πρέπει να είσαι Τούρκος για να μιλάς Τουρκικά; |
| 4 | | Μέχρι το καλοκαίρι θα σας κάνω όλους Τουρκολόγους |
-

1 Teacher: Panayiotis should read the text
2 Student: Turk
3 Teacher: do you have to be a Turk to speak Turkish?
4 by the summer I'll turn all of you into Turkologists!

Just as Panayiotis is about to read aloud in Turkish, another student teases him with 'Turk' (lines 1 & 2). The teacher then responds without trying to mitigate 'Turk's' negative connotations. Instead, he dissociates speaking Turkish from Turkish ethnicity, and uses 'Turkologist' to render the language as something 'technical', as academic knowledge at some remove from the controversies of ethnolinguistic identification.

There is far more we could say, backed up by a lot more evidence, about communicative practice and the representations and imaginings of language with which teachers and students negotiated the entangled pressures and expectations of schooling and de-securitisation: for example, the contribution to peace-building (Charalambous et al 2021), the positioning of multilingual migrant children with Turkish in their repertoires (Charalambous et al 2020; P. Charalambous et al 2019), the dynamics in adult classes where learners sometimes interacted with Turkish-speakers (see Charalambous 2019; P Charalambous et al 2017). But at this point we should move to some conclusions.

5. (In)securitisation's significance for sociolinguistics

Our overall purpose in this paper is to argue for the potential significance for sociolinguistic analysis of (in)securitisation as a process that operates in a range of different situations, and we have pointed to the plurality of forms that it can take, often intersecting with other modes of governance. Given our own interest in its bi- or multi-directional effects in communicative interaction, our generic preference is to speak of (in)securitisation. But even in the two sites we have referred to, it has been useful to talk of *counter-* and *de-*securitisation – 'counter-' recognising existential threats but advancing alternative analyses and solutions, 'de-' proposing that groups, phenomena or processes are moved out of special measures back into the realm of ordinary political and civil affairs. Indeed, in the discourse analysis of broadcast texts, it may well be sufficient to speak of securitisation unprefixated. But whatever affixing helps to clarify particular processes, states of exception beyond the reach of normal legal process and the fear of threats to life are centrally at issue.

In both of the settings that we have covered, (in)security and a sense of existential threat are or have been prominent in public discourse as well as lived experience, and in both, there are/have been zones regarded as dangerous states of exception (favelas in Rio and the buffer zone and 'occupied areas' in Cyprus). Certainly, the differences between the scenes we've described are substantial. In Rio, the research participants were themselves the objects of suspicion and enmity, endangered, criminalised and seen as 'the enemies of... public security' (Extract 5, line 7), while in Cyprus, it was a legacy of war and students' hostility towards historic enemies elsewhere that were in focus. There were also major differences in the resources used to contest securitisation: in one site, local community

activists, working with national and international NGOs; in the other, national government, working through the schooling system, supported by the European Union. But in both, language and communication were prominent local concerns, and efforts to challenge securitisation also engaged reflexively and critically with standard languages, a staple in sociolinguistics.

In both, standard language had links to powerful forces opposed by our research participants, either now or in the past – state bureaucracies and mainstream media in Brazil, and the Turkish state in Cyprus’ historic conflict. This prevented these activists and teachers from relying or falling back on conventional resources, practices and ideological representations, and instead they exercised their agency – their ability to “act otherwise” (Giddens 1984:14) – in devising alternative metalinguistic strategies for, in one case, public discourse and display, and in the other, classroom pedagogy. So in both, we can say, the larger project of overcoming a state of exception and restoring civil rights involved *engaging* with standard language models *without surrendering* to them: in Rio, carrying *papo reto* as a name and insisting on its parity with dictionary Portuguese; in Cyprus, encountering Turkish in classrooms where, as far as possible, the language’s indexical associations with Turkey were neutralised. Sharp differences of course remain: whereas the Brazilian activists highlighted vernacular speech, MrA adhered closely to the standard lexico-grammar of Turkish rather than its Cypriot equivalent²⁶ – a line that he held to in Greek as well – and in doing so, he limited the opportunities for local inter-communal connection generated by linguistic similarities between Cypriot dialects of each language (even though a lot of students oriented to these in their initial selection of Turkish as an option). Even so, in the ideologies they were contesting, Turkish and favela vernaculars were or had been shibboleths eliciting fear and/or suspicion, and both sets of actors generally worked hard at shifting these indexical values – with one, the shibboleth was embraced and elevated in *papo reto*, and with the other, it was schoolified/domesticated – linked to good grades and academic study at school, or if necessary, to Turkish-Cypriots rather than Turks, ‘Constantinopolitans’ rather than ‘İstanbullular’.

This is not to claim that (in)securitisation inevitably problematises standard language ideology, or that the communicative effects of (in)securitisation are easy to predict. The differences between these two sites should be enough to inhibit any such determinism. But it would be hard to make sense of these particular engagements with standard language *without* bringing (in)securitisation into the account,²⁷ and there were other elements in these two scenes that speak to the prototypification of (in)securitisation in §2: in Rio, gated communities, self-censorship and distraction under surveillance (Exx 1, 2), a code of silence, silencing by violent *dura*, the usurpation of voice by press and police (Ex.5); in Cyprus, a buffer zone, learning sequestered from contact (Ex.7,8,9), first-language speakers erased

²⁶ Mr A talking to Constadina: “Sometimes I’m thinking students need to learn something, 2-3 phrases that they can use if they ever speak to a Turkish Cypriot. Because they won’t understand anything and then they will say ‘what kind of Turkish did we learn’? But I cannot teach what Turkish Cypriots say. I need to teach them the right forms. Like in Britain you don’t learn each language that is spoken in an area but you learn the official language”. And talking to students: “Here we learn the correct, the official language, the language that educated people speak”.

²⁷ How, for example, could one explain the lack of reference to Turks or Turkey in MrA’s discourse, or alternatively, what sense could one make of the definition of *Papo Reto* as “A person who positions himself or herself objectively; 2. An attitude of someone who doesn’t deceive; 3. Those who are not fans of scoundrels; 4. A collective of communication and human rights that is active in Complexo do Alemão”?

from accounts of Turkish – and none actually teaching the language. Again, these are not law-like connections or sociolinguistic effects necessarily tied to (in)securitisation, and one only has to think of espionage, of all the language learning in the US army during WWII (Howatt 1984:265-9) or of human creativity under duress more generally, to become wary of, for example, any broader generalisation such as ‘(in)securitisation is hostile to multilingualism’. Indeed, even though it “displac[es] the democratic principles of freedom and justice” (Huysmans cited above), there may very well be circumstances in which one welcomes (periods of) intensified securitisation itself, as in England during the Coronavirus pandemic starting in 2019. Either way, contemporary sociolinguistics has traditionally aligned with *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité* as higher ethical goals (Hymes 1977:204-6; Signorini 2004), and it is very well-equipped to offer some expert analytic insight into practices/experiences of self-censorship, voicelessness, silencing, surveillance etc, potentially either strengthening the fight against these communicative practices/effects, or alternatively, moving beyond the most obvious responses (making the case, for example, for pedagogy like MrA’s, defending it as a workable adaptation to the Turkish language’s precarity at school; see Charalambous et al 2021).

Finally, it is important to emphasise that although we have focused on two sites where security has been a long-standing concern, it is no longer possible to suggest that (in)securitisation isn’t really relevant to the study of everyday life in the global North. In countries like the UK and USA, the lines between police, military and private security now blur and converge “towards the same figure of risk and unease management, the immigrant” (Bigo 2002: 77); cross-border refugee migration is regulated with necropower (Squire 2017; Aradau & Tazzioli 2019; Zembylas 2021)²⁸; surveillance and everyday bordering, requiring people to demonstrate that they have rights to public services, employment, accommodation etc., penetrate deep inside national territorial boundaries, becoming “increasingly visible and dangerous for those placed lower down the economic and racial hierarchies”, threatening them with exclusion, incarceration or expulsion (Yuval-Davis et al 2019; Gallo 2014); and with the Climate Emergency and the current pandemic, security becomes an ever more complex and pressing issue. So (in)securitisation really now needs to become a core concern in sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistic analysis can contribute a good deal to interdisciplinary work on (in)securitisation (Mc Cluskey & Charalambous 2022), and it can discover new research challenges in the process (having had very little to say so far about, for example, surveillance²⁹ or algorithmic influences on communication).³⁰ Indeed, if (in)securitisation doesn’t start to feature in textbooks and introductory courses, people may start to wonder about the contemporary relevance of sociolinguistics.

²⁸ “the necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003), of allowing boats to sink, closing borders, detaining adults and children who are seeking refuge from persecution and burning down spontaneous camps occupied by homeless migrants amount not only to the violation of human rights, but more broadly point to a general consensus among politicians and publics that some human lives are worth less than others” (Mayblin et al 2020:108)

²⁹ See however: Jones 2015, 2017; Eley & Rampton 2020.

³⁰ But see Georgakopoulou et al 2021; Rampton 2016; Maly 2020; Blommaert 2020

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