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The Brazilianness notion in the Anglo-Saxon journalism: a discourse analysis of The Times coverage during FIFA 2014 World Cup

La noción de brasilidad en el periodismo anglosajón:
un análisis del discurso de *The Times* en el Mundial de la FIFA 2014

*A noção de brasilidade no jornalismo anglo-saxão:
uma análise discursiva de The Times na Copa do Mundo FIFA 2014*

ABSTRACT:

This article analyzes the discourse of the English journal *The Times* to verify how their journalists covered the 2014 FIFA World Cup and, in this coverage, how they described Brazil (the host country) and Brazilians. The research methodology is based on French Discourse Analysis (specifically, on the idea of "implicit" by Oswald Ducrot) and on Cultural Studies (notably, on Stuart Hall's studies). The objective of the paper is to verify if *The Times* texts worked with commonplaces about Brazil and Brazilians, such as the epithet "Brazil: country of soccer". In a fragmented identities context and in a period that some social scientists suspect of a classical identity crisis, would Brazil and Brazilians be described as "the" country of soccer, from an essentialist and homogenizing perspective, as if all country inhabitants were passionate about soccer (with no exceptions)? How do *The Times'* journalists work with this discursive construction in the coverage of a World Cup? Which other identities are reinforced (or produced) about Brazil and Brazilians? The analysis indicates that although at certain moments the texts homogenize and (re)produce commonplaces about Brazil and Brazilians, there were excerpts in which a pluralistic and differentiating representation of local realities became notable.

RESUMEN:

Este artículo analiza el discurso del diario inglés *The Times* con el objetivo de verificar cómo los periodistas del rotativo cubrieron la Copa del Mundo de la FIFA 2014 y, dentro de esa cobertura, cómo describieron a Brasil (el país sede) y a los brasileños. La metodología de investigación se basa en conceptos del Análisis del Discurso Francés (específicamente, en la idea de "implícitos", elaborada por Oswald Ducrot) y en los Estudios Culturales (donde destaca Stuart Hall). De esta manera, se pretende verificar si los textos del periódico trabajaron con lugares comunes sobre Brasil y los brasileños, como el epíteto "Brasil: país del fútbol". ¿En un contexto de una supuesta fragmentación de las identidades y de una crisis de las identidades clásicas, fueron Brasil y los brasileños descritos por la prensa anglosajona como "el" "País del fútbol", desde una perspectiva esencialista y homogeneizadora, como si todos los brasileños fuesen unos apasionados del fútbol (sin excepciones)? ¿Qué otras identidades son (re) producidas sobre Brasil y los brasileños? La investigación indica que a pesar de que en determinados fragmentos los textos reprodujeron y homogeneizaron lugares comunes sobre Brasil y los brasileños, hubo extractos en los que se hizo notar una representación pluralista y diferenciadora.

RESUMO:

Este artigo analisa o discurso do jornal inglês *The Times* a fim de verificar como os jornalistas do periódico cobriram a Copa do Mundo FIFA 2014 e, nessa cobertura, como descreveram o Brasil (o país sede) e os brasileiros. A metodologia de pesquisa se baseia na Análise do Discurso Francesa (especificamente, na ideia de "implícitos", elaborada por Oswald Ducrot) e nos Estudos Culturais (notadamente, nos estudos de Stuart Hall). Objetiva-se verificar se os textos do jornal trabalharam com alguns lugares-comuns a respeito do Brasil e dos brasileiros, como o epíteto "Brasil: país do futebol". Em um contexto de uma

suposta fragmentação das identidades e de uma "crise das identidades clássicas" (nas palavras de Néstor Garcia Canclini), seríamos descritos pela imprensa anglo-saxã como "o" "País do futebol", a partir de uma perspectiva essencialista e homogeneizadora, como se todos os brasileiros fossem apaixonados por este esporte (sem exceções)? Quais outras identidades são reforçadas (ou mesmo produzidas) sobre o Brasil e os brasileiros? As análises indicam que apesar de, em alguns excertos, os textos homogeneizarem e reproduzirem lugares-comuns acerca do Brasil e dos brasileiros, houve trechos em que uma representação pluralista e diferenciadora se fez notar.

1. Introduction

The objective of this paper is to analyze the coverage of *The Times'* journalists published on its online version [https://www.thetimes.co.uk/] about the 2014 FIFA World Cup held in Brazil. Our interest is to identify the way with which the newspaper described the country and its inhabitants in texts about the event. Our theoretical foundation considers the involvement of sports with mass media, journalism and culture in contemporary times – especially when we think about production and reproduction of national identities through media discourses (Horne & Mazonreiter, 2006).

We also work with Renato Ortiz's critics to the "essentialist" perspective that Social Sciences – in particular, Cultural Anthropology – legitimized, until the 1980s, an idea that every nation would imply an intrinsic character to its culture (Ortiz, 2013, p. 618). The concept of social representations – explored by authors like Moscovici (2003), Jodelet (2009), Hall (2016) and, in Brazil, Jovchelovitch (2004; 2008) and Porto (2006) – is another basilar notion in which we are theoretically settled. Representations (such as the national identities and the brasilianness notion) are taken as symbolic, historic and social constructions, engendered by a plural, inter-subjective and inter-relational web of discourses, cultural values and cultural meanings (Jovchelovitch, 2008; Hall, 2016).

More than that, in a scenario of "a diversity of public spheres" (Jovchelovitch, 2004, p. 28), reflect on how different contexts and different communities produce knowledge about their otherness emerges as a singular challenge, since "the proliferation of mass media and the impact of globalized practices on local arenas intensifies the clashes between the different ways of knowing and raises questions" (Jovchelovitch, 2004, p. 28).

In this context, regard the dynamics in which journalism is situated becomes imperative when studying the international journalistic coverage of a globally mediated sports mega-event such as the 2014 FIFA World Cup, once "the flow of communication and information on a global scale has become a regular and penetrant feature of social life" (Thompson, 2005, p. 208).

In a brief definition, we understand globalization as the "increasing interconnection between parts of the world, a process that gave rise to complex forms of interaction and interdependence" (Thompson, 2005, p. 197), producing a more interconnected world, causing a compression of the space-time relation and reflecting directly in journalistic practice and on news consumption (Hall, 2000, p. 67).

In this way, individuals cognitive capacity would be shaped by the symbolic constructions inscribed on discourses of communication vehicles – a process that Thompson describes as "mediated mundanity" (Thompson, 2005, p. 61). Precisely, the criteria which based our choice by *The Times* to the analysis corpus¹ was the international penetration and the historical concern presented by the vehicle with "outside" issues, features cultivated since its first editions and maintained until these first years of the twenty-first century (Molina, 2008, p. 380)².

Considering, then, a journalistic coverage of a sports mega-event as a space in which, besides facts, imaginations could be socially constructed and (re)produced, we intend to verify how a segment of international journalism attributes "senses" and "values" to a host nation and, more, if (re)produces commonplaces in its discourses about a host country of a global sports spectacle as Brazil were in 2014.

KEYWORDS

Brazilian
National Identity;
Sports and
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Anglo-Saxon
Journalism; 2014
FIFA World Cup;
French Discourse
Analysis.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Identidad nacional
brasileña;
Comunicación
y Deporte;
Periodismo
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del Mundo de la
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del discurso.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

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The country lived a paradigmatic moment in its history: the eyes of the world were turned to its abilities on and off the soccer stadiums (Marques, 2015, p. 15). By using, hence, the methods of French Discourse Analysis (or French DA, to use shorten terms), we will try to verify which Brazilian identities appear on reports of *The Times* about Brazil and its inhabitants, looking for to indicate which commonplaces are (re)produced and which discourses are presupposed or implied (Ducrot, 1987) as symbols of the “nation” and of its “people”.

The choice by French DA is justified since we sought an approximation between the linguistic-textual reality and the historic-social context of the journalistic productions about the 2014 World Cup, as well as an approximation between the analyzed texts and the pre-established notions and discourses about a “Brazilian” identity – especially, that one forged via football. Our initial hypothesis is that *The Times* journalists’ discourses reinforce certain representations of “Brazilian Culture” such as the epithet “Country of Soccer” – a hypothesis that, no doubt, can be denied at the end of the research, because of its a *priori* nature.

2. The epithet “Country of soccer” and the crisis of classical identities

Amid the many discourses that compose the notions of Brazilian identity, one of them got relevance during the twentieth century and has attracted the attention of Brazilian academics who research sport in this first years of the twenty-first: the epithet “Brazil: Country of Soccer”. Helal (2014, p. 18) indicates that this notion is repeated many times and sold to foreigners as one of the best images about the country. The author remembers that it was a social construction initially fulfilled by journalists and intellectuals in a moment of consolidation of Brazil as a nation-state, in the first decades of the 1900’s.

At that time, new ways to conceptualize the country and its inhabitants has developed, overcoming some racist and biological explanations about Brazilian Culture that, until that point, considered racial miscegenation as a backwardness (Helal, 2014, p. 21). The sociologist Gilberto Freyre (1900-1997) was the first to deny this racial thesis in *Casa Grande e Senzala* (1933), his most famous book – published in English for the first time as *The Masters and the Slaves* (1946). Soccer emerged, then, as a vain of identity to Brazil and Brazilians in a moment of a need to (re)create a nationality ethos and to forge a “Brazilian identity”.

In the article “*Foot-ball Mulato*”, published in *Diários Associados* journal, Freyre (1938) presented the basis to this “Country of soccer” notion – mainly, country of “football-art”. He proposed a “Brazilian style of playing” and compared this “Brazilian style” in soccer to a “style” of “Brazilian being” out of the stadiums, as well as a unique and singular “social democratic formation”, different then from our foreigner otherness.

Freyre (1938) pointed out that our “*Foot-ball Mulato*” – as a product of the racial miscegenation – is an expression of our social formation, “democratic like nothing else and rebellious to excesses of internal and external ordering; to excesses of all that is uniform, geometrical and standardized; to radicalisms which make individual variation or personal spontaneity disappear” (Freyre, 1938, p. 4).

According to the author, Brazilian *mulatismo* has become known for its taste for flexibility, surprise and floridness, which recalls dancing and capoeira steps, particularly its dance elements; a dance that allows improvisation, diversity and individual spontaneity. Thus, the Brazilian *mulato*, in the words of Freyre, makes soccer less European giving him curves and aspects of dance: “It was precisely what felt the European journalist that call Brazilian players of ‘dancers’ of the ball. We dance with the ball” (Freyre, 1938, p. 4).

Considering then soccer as an element of national distinction, Freyre’s text reinforces an idea of opposition between a “Brazilian identity” and a “foreign identity” – notably, the duality between a Brazilian Dionysian football and a European Apollonian football. Thus, it founds a notion that becomes frequent in national and foreign journalistic texts about Brazil and Brazilian football (especially, about the national team in World

Cups). “All these years’ later writers are saying essentially the same thing as Freyre said in 1938” (Maranhão and Knijnik, 2011, p. 63).

Under this perspective, soccer becomes famous in Brazil not only as a sports modality but also as a social and cultural institution that produces and reproduces a sense of nationality, as claims DaMatta (1982), in a seminal text to the sociological studies of this sport in the country. Soccer, thus, legitimated itself as a symbolic element of representation of a “national imagined community” (Anderson, 1983).

This discourse has intensified in a context of a search for a “modernization” of the nation (during the processes of urbanization and industrialization, in the first half of the twentieth century) and acquired repercussion after the loss of Brazilian Team to Uruguay, in 1950 FIFA World Cup. The victories in tournaments of 1958, 1962 and 1970 also have contributed to the foundation of this imagined notion, “a story we can tell ourselves without shame, resentment or hurt” (DaMatta *et al.*, 1982, p. 18).

Wisnik (2008) indicates that the Brazilianness’ discourses were (and are) marked by a duality, based on relations between football and society. This duality is immediately apparent in the title of Wisnik’s book – in an antagonism of meaning between the words “poison” and “remedy” – and in passages in which the author emphasizes relevance “for good and for the evil” (Wisnik, 2008, p. 28) of soccer as a producer of sociability and identity.

Even so, despite to be “repeated several times and sold abroad as one of the images that best represents our country”, according to Helal (2014), in a context of globalization and fragmentation of identities, authors who study the relations of sport with the Brazilian identity (Helal, Lovisoló & Soares, 2001; Helal & Soares, 2002; Toledo, 2015) are indicating a tendency (or at least a possibility) of a cooling off of this notion: “Unlike decades ago, today it would be fair to ask if Brazil would be letting to be the ‘country of soccer’” (Helal, 2014, p. 21).

This concern of Brazilian academics, we need to mention, inserts on that authors as Canclini (2006) affirms to be a moment of crisis of the “classical identities”, or in what Hall (1992; 2000; 2016) diagnoses like a decline of the “old identities”. At this point, it is worth to remember that Hall discusses if national identities are so unified and homogeny as represents to be.

The author indicates that a national culture works as a system of symbolic representations but considering “the claim that national identities were once centered, coherent, and whole, but are now being dislocated by the process of globalization” (Hall, 1992, p. 613). Besides that, we are considering that journalism – and the coverage of a sports mega-event – is a place in which “narratives of nations” and social representations could be produced and reproduced (Hall, 1992, p. 613).

Therefore, at a time when a crisis of classical identities or a decline of “old identities” is suspected (such as the idea that Brazil is the “Country of soccer”), it is up to us to problematize: how one of the most important journalistic Anglo-Saxon vehicles operates his discourses about an “Other” country in a coverage of a global sports mega-event like a Soccer World Cup? Which “commonplaces” are reinforced? Which narratives do they create (if do they really create one)? And how we would be able to verify these discursive constructions?

Looking for answers to those questions and to base our initial assumption, before to present the analysis, we will focus on the theories of journalism, being especially grounded in the perspective of constructionist theories and in the perspective of the interactionist theories presented by Traquina (2005).

3. Journalistic discourse as a social construction and the Discourse Analysis as a theoretical and methodological tooling

News is part of the background through which and with people think.
(Michael Schudson, 1995, p. 15).

Our theoretical proposal recognizes, as does Traquina (2005), that journalistic work is highly conditioned by the intellectual and economic poles of the “journalistic field” (Bourdieu, 1997), but also considers that journalism is a source of power due to its “relative autonomy”. Therefore, its professionals have power, since “journalists are active participants in the definition and construction of news and, consequently, in the construction of reality” (Traquina, 2005, p. 26).

It will not be our concern to revisit the various Theories of Journalism (2005) presented by Traquina, but rather, we will note that the author reinforces a strand of journalism studies that have been strengthened since the 1970s, which he calls “constructionist theories”. These theories constitute a turning point in academic research on journalism, since they oppose the perspective of news as distortion and manipulation of reality (typical of political action theories); and, moreover, because they are opposed to mirror theory, one of the first journalism theories, for which journalists would only report the facts as “reality” reveals them (Traquina, 2005, p. 146).

In opposition to this thesis, the paradigm of news as a social construction does not imply that journalistic texts are fictional products, derived from the imagination of journalists, but rather, take them as discourses about the “real” – that is, subscribe to social reality – marked by cultural conventions. Thus, “considering the news as narratives does not deny the value of considering them as external reality” (Bird & Dardenne, 1993, p. 265 *apud* Traquina, 2005, p. 169).

In this context, understand news as producers of “imagined” (Anderson, 1983) stories and narratives – as discursive devices that produce and reproduce “narratives of nation” (Hall, 1992) and social representations about a “nation” – it is not deny its informational potential, but rather, it is to emphasize the inter-subjective, polyphonic and inter-discursive aspects that perform it.

In this sense, “the conceptualization of news as stories highlights the importance of understanding the cultural dimension of news” (Traquina, 2005, p.170). Sociologist Michael Schudson, in *The Power of News* (1995), also emphasizes this cultural aspect of journalistic discourse, always produced by individuals circumscribed by socially shared meanings – by sources of information, by other journalists and, obviously, by the historical and sociocultural reality that surrounds them (Schudson, 1995, p. 14).

From this perspective, understanding journalistic texts as products of the interactions and cultural structures to which they are inscribed is fundamental for the analysis that we intend to develop. We suspect that journalism – through language – would contribute to the construction of certain discourses about social reality and – through these discourses – would reaffirm (even if not purposely) certain interpretations about the identity of an imagined nation. Thus, it seems that journalists can produce (and reproduce) cultural and social identities and reinforce (or not) homogenizations and commonplaces about a “nation”.

In this regard, it is important that we question ourselves about how linguistic and non-linguistic relations inherent to discourses can be detected in analyzed texts. That is, how to look at a sentence and to capture what is said and what is implicit (not said) in the speech of the enunciator, so that, later, the prevalence or the absence of homogenization in a journalistic text can be evaluated.

At this point, French Discourse Analysis (DA) presents as an outstanding theoretical and methodological analysis tooling. The method emerged between the 1960s and 1970s in France as a textual analysis

methodology and as a pedagogical practice through which extra-discursive reality and socio-historical conditions of production of literary works become relevant to a chain of researchers - linguists, historians, psychologists – and French teachers (Maingueneau, 1997, p. 10).

Contrary to a structuralist approach, they began to consider discourse between language and ideology (Brandão, n. d., p. 7). The option for this theoretical set is aligned with the possibility offered by French DA to understand the discourses about identities in a relational, dialogic and polyphonic way; as symbolic elements circumscribed to a process of cultural negotiation which is often contradictory and full of variables.

We are “invited”, then, by French DA to analyze the discourses beyond their linguistic materiality, understanding that texts will be permeated by subjective, inter-subjective and inter-relational aspects (as much as our analysis). This does not mean, however, that we should seek ceaselessly a hidden meaning in the texts, trying to frame them in too abstract and preconceived constructions, but rather, we need to analyze them in their manifested aspects, as a meaningful and living construction, permeated by a diversity of voices and interests.

As Orlandi (2003) points out, “in discourse analysis, we try to understand language by making sense as a symbolic work, part of the general social work, constitutive of man and his history” (Orlandi, 2003, p. 15). To an analyst of a discourse, then, “what matters is not the linguistic organization of the text, but how the text organizes the relation of language to history in the meaningful work of the subject in his relation to the world” (Orlandi, 2003, p. 68).

Further, it is fundamental to note that “every discourse is constructed in a network of other discourses; that is, in an inter-discursive network” (Brandão, 2014, p. 2). This means that no discourse is unique and singular, because no discourse is “alone” in the world. Subjects can appropriate from discourses of others through argumentative choices and through the establishment of narrative strategies.

Thus, in the coverage of a mega event, journalism can produce and reproduce identities and construct discourses about a country, since discourses are in constant interaction with other ideas that have already been – or are being – produced. One of the precursors of the French Discourse Analysis, the linguist Oswald Ducrot considers this interaction of the individuals through the language and, on the other hand, recognizes in language the ability to produce it.

Ducrot (1987) argues that the founding element of discourse is precisely what is not said in the text: the “implicit” elements of the discourse enunciated; that which is not placed in the phrase, but presents itself in a common way to the two characters of the dialogue. It is an object of fundamental complicity that connects the participants of the communicative act. In this sense, the author points to two levels of possible “implicit” in a text: the “presupposition” and the “implicit” (Ducrot, 1987, p.32).

The “Presupposition” is an argumentative tactic in which the speaker takes the receptor to admit the presupposed content, imposing to him the adhesion. The presupposition belongs first to the phrase and it is transmitted from the sentence to the statement. It is then an integral part of the meaning of the statements since there is no way to enunciate a sentence with presuppositions without denouncing its presence: it functions as an image of the enunciation, an image imposed to the listener.

The “Implicit”, on the other hand, appears connected to the enunciation, to the rhetorical component of discourse, constituting an option of organizing this discourse and producing effects of sense that settle in the interpretation and that result from the recognition of what the speaker says. It is perfectly possible for the interlocutor to continue the discourse enunciated to him, a meaning that must be deciphered by the receptor in the way planned by the speaker.

It is possible, however, to point out a common aspect to “presupposition” and “implicit”. In both cases, the speaker has the possibility of withdrawing from his speech. In the first case, by the impossibility of the interlocutor to continue the discourse; in the second, by the fact that the speaker will always be able to appeal to the literal sense of his statement, denying that he intended to communicate this or that content (Lebler, 2016, p. 313). It means that our analysis can always be denied in the last instance, which by their inter-subjective and inter-relational nature, we believe, does not invalidate them.

4. *The Times* discourses in the coverage of 2014 FIFA World Cup

The Times's coverage on the eve of the World Cup was focused on security problems, delays, and protests that were surrounding the mega-event. Sports aspects were also being highlighted. The article *Clashes in São Paulo amid safety fears over the stadium*, published on June 10th, two days before the opening of competition, was emphasizing that the match between Brazil and Croatia would occur in a troubled environment, marked by delays and protests:

Brazilian riot police have used tear gas to break up protests in support of striking transport workers in São Paulo only days before the opening game of the World Cup finals. [...] Meanwhile, there are major safety fears after emerged that organisers are yet to test the stadium that will host the opening game at anything near full capacity.

Fifa insisted that Brazil's opening group-A game at Arena de São Paulo would be played in front of a full crowd of 61,600, even though one large temporary seating structure in the stadium was closed during trial safety runs.

British stadium specialists said last night that for a ground to be granted the mandatory safety certificates required in the UK, any new stadium would have to be tested at least once “at or around 100 per cent capacity”.

The final test event on Sunday – Corinthians Under-20s taking on their Under-17 counterparts – took place without any spectators in an empty stadium, a week after a game between the São Paulo club's senior team and Botafogo was hosted at partial capacity, with only 40,000 tickets put on sale.

On that occasion, the local fire department failed to approve the use of a giant temporary seating area, meaning that Brazil's opening match will be the first time the stadium will have operated at full capacity (Ducker, 2014b).

The text's author James Ducker – sports' correspondent of *The Times* in Manchester between 2005 and 2016 and especially sent to Brazil in 2014 to the coverage of mega-event – questions the licenses granted to the stadium's operation during the World Cup. The author also stated that in the previous day (June 9th) there was work being done at the stadium, a fact noted by the reporter during a visit to the Arena Corinthians:

The licence to operate World Cup matches at the ground as well as the safety and security licences were due to be published today in line with standard Brazilian procedures, according to Fifa and the Local Organising Committee (LOC). However, when *The Times* visited the Arena São Paulo yesterday, work was still being carried out on the stadium (Ducker, 2014b).

The text also reminds that the stadium ended up being paid, mostly, with public money from taxes, which left many Brazilians dissatisfied and ended up also motivating the protests:

Although Brazilians were originally told that much of the stadium costs would be privately funded, taxpayers have ended up footing the majority of the bill, a situation that has caused anger and sparked protests (Ducker, 2014b).

The turbulent political context in which the World Cup started was also highlighted in another report by James Ducker (*Boy Wonder can ensure Brazil sing one tune*), published on [https://www.thetimes.co.uk/] on June 12th, hours before the opening of the World Cup. The opening paragraphs of the text present this scenario and refer to Brazil as a country where football and music are “indelibly linked” to what the author calls “global psyche”:

It is a reflection of the bureaucracy and petty realpolitik that have turned what should be one of the most romantic World Cups into a political hot potato that in a country where football and music are indelibly linked in the global psyche, instruments will be banned from Brazil’s stadiums over the course of the tournament.[...]

It means the thousands of Brazil fans who will turn the Arena de Sao Paulo into a sea of yellow and green for the tournament’s long-awaited curtain-raiser against Croatia this evening will have to devise some more creative means of making a din than simply relying on the dull tones of the stadium PA (Ducker, 2014a).

The striker Neymar and the Brazilian national team are pointed out by the journalist as the only group that could ensure that the tensions in the country were dissolved, making the “Brazilians” return to sing “largely to the same tune” if the victories occurred at the games:

And yet Brazil knows deep down that there is only one group who can ensure the country are singing largely to the same tune after one of the most conflicted, divisive and ugly build-ups in the 84-year history of the World Cup, a monument to bloated, inept and self-serving administration more in keeping with what some have described as a “semi-feudal oligarchy”.

The weight of expectation on Luiz Felipe Scolari and his Brazil players – none more so than that boy wonder, Neymar – was always going to be acute but the financial burden of a tournament that threatens to leave little social legacy bar 12 shiny stadiums in a country craving what protesters have ironically dubbed “Fifa-standard” healthcare, housing, education, and infrastructure has increased the pressure to almost intolerable levels (Ducker, 2014a).

The text implies (Ducrot, 1987), then, that only victories of the Brazilian team would be capable to settle the anger of certain social groups out of the fields. Just in this way, the inhabitants of the country could return to sing “largely to the same tune”. Football is described, then, as a possible “remedy” – to dialogue with the conceptualization of Wisnik (2008) – to national tensions, an “antidote” that would be capable of “unite” the country if the results at soccer arenas were positives.

Ducker also mentions a survey by the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* and remembers that support for the tournament had declined in the country since November 2008, a year after Brazil was formally announced as the host of the mega-event. Despite, journalist mentions that the support to Brazilian Selection had grown in the period, much for the performance of the team in the Confederations Cup in 2013. Neymar’s volley goal in the opening game against Japan and the victory by 3 to 0 against Spain in the cup final, according to the author, “rekindled the country’s longstanding love affair with the Seleção”:

The seeds for this support were sown during Brazil’s Confederations Cup triumph last



Figure 1. *Boy wonder can ensure Brazil sing one tune*. Text published on [https://www.thetimes.co.uk/] on June 12th hours before the World Cup’s opening. Source: [https://www.thetimes.co.uk/].

summer when Neymar's exquisite third-minute volley in the opening match against Japan rekindled the country's longstanding love affair with the Seleção, a bond only bolstered by the 3-0 defeat of Spain, the world, and European champions, in the final.

The question is whether Brazil can repeat the trick on sport's biggest stage knowing that failure could trigger a wave of fresh anger over World Cup's estimated costs of \$13.5 billion (about £8 billion) to taxpayers, an exorbitant sum that could have funded the country's annual "Bolsa Família" social welfare programme twice over. Tostão, a member of Brazil's 1970 World Cup-winning team, summed things up yesterday when he said: "If we win we are going to be heroes, if we lose we are going to be mercenaries". There is a fickleness at the heart of Brazilian supporters (Ducker, 2014a).

The text calls into question if the Brazilian national team would repeat the good results obtained in the Confederations Cup and presupposes that a failure of the team in the World Cup could incite a new wave of protests. A speech by former Brazilian player and columnist Tostão is quoted by James Ducker in an apparent attempt to legitimize his own argument and, at the same time, bring readers closer to reality and local personalities. The passage implies a dualistic, unstable and passionate Brazilian identity: "If we win, we are going to be heroes, if we lose we are going to be mercenaries".

In the following phrase ["There is a fickleness at the heart of Brazilian supporters"], the adjective noun "fickleness" presupposes (and reinforces) the idea of a Brazilian "being" that is "unstable", "inconstant" and, thus, passionate, emotional and susceptible to sudden mood swings that could vary depending on the results at the games. The passage, however, denotes that support for the National Team was not unanimous at that time.

Football is also presupposed as a "remedy" for the tensions and protests of certain social groups in an article published on June 13th after Brazil and Croatia's match. The report – also signed by James Ducker – indicates, however, a divided and unequal nation, in which part of the population had shown resistance to celebrate the opening ceremony of the mega-event. The article's title – *Divided nation shows reluctance to party at World Cup opening ceremony* (Figure 2) – and the text itself demark these aspects:

The truth is that Brazil is unsure how it should feel about this World Cup, uncertain about how an outpouring of patriotism might be received when there are so many groups appalled that the country has committed \$13.5 billion to fund a football tournament when schools, hospitals and public transport go neglected.

Even after spending only four days in São Paulo, and watching a city's infrastructure creak amid the sheer masses of people here it is easy to sympathise with the protesters.

Yet as the national anthem was belted out at the Arena Corinthians last night amid an emotive sea of yellow and green shirts and flags, the smiles on the faces of supporters hardly suggested a preoccupation with thoughts about pressing social issues.

Some Brazilians want to enjoy the party while it lasts and worry about the rest later. Others, not least those protesters who tried to block a road leading to the stadium yesterday only be attacked with teargas by police, obviously feel very differently. The split is marked.

If anything can lift the mood in this country for a brief while, though, it is football (Ducker, 2014c).



Figure 2. *Divided nation shows reluctance to party*. Text published on June 13th, after the match between Brazil and Croatia. Source: [https://www.thetimes.co.uk].

In another section of the article, Ducker shows surprise and difficulty to report what he had found in Brazil and seeks to base his argument on a local source. The author finishes the text with the idea that football could unite a divided country, but this, only time could tell if would occur:

Many outsiders might have expected Brazil to be cloaked in green and yellow and positively bouncing to the sound of beeping car horns and samba drums but it is hard to over-emphasise just how the build-up has been. Fear of reprisal certainly stalks some.

Miguel Gonçalves, a shop owner in the Rio de Janeiro neighbourhood of Flamengo, chose to follow tradition and decorate the street on which he lives, but some took offence. “When I was putting up flags, someone stopped me and asked ‘So you are supporting the politicians? You are supporting Fifa?’”, he explained. “I said, ‘No, I am supporting my country, I am supporting the Seleção. This is football, not politics’. People are mixing these up.”

Whether football retains the power to unite a country divided, only time will tell (Ducker, 2014c).

Therefore, there is an intercultural and plural representation of the various social groups that make up the multiple and unequal Brazilian realities (Ortiz, 2013, p. 622; Ribeiro, 1995; Schwarz, 2015, p. 15), however, there is also the homogenization of an emotional “Brazilian being”, one who would base his decisions more from the heart than from reason. This Hegelian discourse – set forth in the Brazilian historiography of the early twentieth century, in texts such as *Raízes do Brasil* (1936) by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (1995) – appears in The Times’s descriptions of the fans, demonstrators and Brazilian players.

During the real-time coverage of Brazil x Germany match in the World Cup semifinal, journalist Howard Swains indicates that Brazilian players were inconsolable and claims that the result was an unprecedented humiliation for “the most successful nation in the history of World Cups”, which had “the most passionate supporters of them all”:

As Germany Players pogo in delight in front of their fans, their Brazil counterparts are inconsolable. This is humiliation on an unprecedented scale. The most successful nation in the history of the World Cup, with the most passionate supporters of them all, have just gone out of the tournament they were supposed to win in the most whimpering fashion. There are no words (Swains, 2014).

In this passage, one more time, the discourse of The Times’ journalist takes as an implicit the homogenization that represents “Brazil” as “The Country of Soccer”, notably, when the author mention that “Brazilians” are “the most passionate supporters of them all”.

5. Final Considerations

The analyses confirm, hence, that *The Times* journalists’ discourses (at least the analyzed ones) reinforce certain essentialist Brazilianness’ notions such as the epithet “Country of Soccer”. There were also recurring forms of distinction of “Brazilian being” related to emotions, mixture and passion, implicit characteristics to the idea that everyone in the country is passionate about soccer or to the idea that positive results in this sport would be able to make the “Brazilians” sang into the same “tone”.

These constructions approximate itself to a representation of Brazilian cultural identity linked to an emotional and Dionysian tendency, which was implicit in some analyzed excerpts, in opposition to the idea of a “European” and Apollonian rationality. The roots of this passion’s discourse, it is important to reiterate, are inter-discursively satisfied in Hegel’s thought, when the author affirmed that Latin America would be a space of nature and emotion, as opposed to a Europe – and especially to a Germany – constituted by reason.

This emotional representation was still implicit in the excerpts in which soccer was considered as a possible “remedy” (Wisnik, 2008) to national tensions, as in reports of James Ducker. The British journalist’s texts indicate, however, at the same time, a divided and unequal nation, in which part of the population showed resistance to celebrate the opening ceremony of the mega-event. It highlights the fact that, although at certain moments the texts homogenize and (re)produce commonplaces about Brazil and Brazilians, there were excerpts in which a pluralistic and differentiating representation of local realities became notable.

It is expected, therefore, that we have demonstrated how theories and methodological resources adopted could contribute to the research and to the analysis that we have developed, searching the symbolic productions and commonplaces from which the discourses about Brazil and the Brazilians were elaborated in the coverage of the 2014 World Cup analyzed. Despite the reinforcement of certain homogenization, it is important to reiterate the pendularity with which these narratives were constructed, influenced by the turbulent context in which the World Cup took place.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that the interaction of the foreign journalist with the local sources seemed to influence the discourse of the correspondent or special envoy about the host country, engendering implications in the way with which foreign journalists (re)produce commonplaces and cultural values about their otherness and, at the same time, being used by the journalist to legitimate his own discursive construction. This is an aspect that is in line with the constructionist and interactionist theories of journalism presented, but which is left to be better explored in other moments of research, when this one, in fact, was included among the objectives of the same.

For now, we finish this article recovering a question with which we have faced in the whole course of this research, about which, however, it will not be possible to demark a position: we would be, in fact, experiencing a “decline of the old identities” or a “crisis” of the classical identities? Regarding the results found and noting the provisional and inter-relational nature of any possible answer, we believe that would not be possible to end this discussion in these pages (and probably in how many were written, as point out Renato Ortiz and Michel Debrun, when standing out the difficulty of thinking about the question of national identity).

Nevertheless, we hope that the research effort carried out here serve for future reflections in the field of discursive studies of media and identities and, above all, so that other researchers can – by using the same methodology adopted here – broaden the study of relations between journalistic activity and the production and reproduction of identity discourses.

We conclude, then, with a question that aims to stand out the dualistic, polyphonic and interrelational character in which the question of Brazilianness is inserted, looking for to overcome the pendularity of the problem and trying to leave any definitive and absolute answer open: were we still the “Country of Soccer”? Sometimes, it seems that yes; in others, we would risk responding with a no. When it comes to Brazilianness, it is better to do not “close” the question.

What has been effectively demonstrated is that journalism, as a phenomenon of language, can contribute to the construction of certain discourses about society and social reality and, through these discourses, can reaffirm (even if not purposely) certain interpretations about the identity and culture of an imagined community, producing and reproducing cultural and social identities, and reinforcing homogenizations and commonplaces about a “nation”.

NOTES

¹ It is also important to point that our master's degree research (Cortez, 2017), in which this article is based, analyzes the identities created and/or reinforced by another three journals beyond The Times (The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and The Guardian). We opt to expose just part of the results of one of them here due to the intrinsic space limitations that an article has. The choice for these four journals was based on the representativeness and on importance of the vehicles in their countries – which, in case of The Times, will be briefly explored in the following paragraphs and notes – and on the type of texts produced by them, with analytical and interpretative characteristics and opened to global themes such as a World Cup.

² Launched in the context of the French Revolution (1789-1799) and the in eve of the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) – events that aroused public curiosity in an England that had just began the Industrial Revolution and had a middle class ascending –, the newspaper had, since this beginning years, the care to “set up a good information service abroad, with correspondents in several European cities” (Molina, 2008, p. 381). The vehicle also offered significant contributions to the history of the press: “Before him, newspapers were seen as political instruments linked to political parties” (Molina, 2008, p. 380). Founded in 1785 by John Walter I, in London, and controlled by the News Corporation – a group of the Australian Rupert Murdoch – since 1981, The Times is one of the oldest generalist newspapers in circulation on Western world. In the nineteenth century, it was the great newspaper of world reference and served as a model for the formation of other journals: “The New York Times is the Times of New York (...) The Times of India is the Times of that country. But The Times was The Times, with no need for any place to adjectives” (Molina, 2008, p. 380). According to the Audit Bureau of Circulations (the agency that measures the sale of newspapers in the United Kingdom), it is Britain's eighth largest print newspaper with an average of 451,000 daily circulation copies in January 2017. In these first decades of twenty-one century, The Times also invests on online journalism “as a way of spread its content globally” (Molina, 2008, p. 416).

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