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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND
DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDIES

RESEARCH REPORT:
A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF FOUR BRAZILIAN LANGUAGE POLICY DOCUMENTS (1500 – 1988)

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Johannesburg, March 2011

ABSTRACT

This study aims at understanding how languages are constructed in Brazilian policy documents from 1500 to 1988 by analysing dominant discourses operating in these documents and what ideologies are entrenched in these texts. In order to carry out this study, four documents were analysed using two critical discourse analysis approaches. Results demonstrated that in the four key Brazilian policy documents, language is constructed to bring civilisation and salvation to the natives, to protect them from external forces, to establish the Brazilian identity and national identity by including and excluding groups. Results also show that legitimation, reification, and dissimulation (Thompson, 1990) are the dominant discourses operating in these documents. The role of language in education has been to introduce the Portuguese language and the national ideology, and to exclude other languages and cultures that are not in conformity with the national policy. Therefore it can be claimed that education in Brazil has been used as a tool to disempower and eradicate minority languages in its territory. Despite many political, educational, social, economic changes that have occurred in Brazil, the same ideologies remain as dominant groups continue to maintain the hegemonic power in the Brazilian society.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report entitled “A Critical Discourse Analysis of Four Brazilian Policy Documents (1500 – 1988)” is my own work. It has not been previously submitted by me for any degree, diploma or examination in any other educational institution.

I also declare that all the references used and made in this report have been duly cited and acknowledged. The research report is hereby submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English Language Education in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

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Daniela Malheiros Mendonca

Johannesburg, 20th March 2011.

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