Languages and cultural identities: a study with Brazilians of Arab origin in Foz do Iguaçu

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This paper is based on an ethnographically informed research at the interface between Applied Linguistics and Linguistic Anthropology, which is aimed at building an understanding of discourses of identity among Arabic speakers in Foz do Iguaçu and how the Arabic language is evoked as a symbol of identity among them. Considering that our cultural and linguistic identities are socio-historically situated, I will present how this linguistic group represents their relation to the languages of their repertoire, as well as their diasporic links to both countries – the Arabic-speaking one and Brazil – through narratives. It is through the analysis of their small stories – these significant pieces of life that give voice and power to their experiences – that I will try to show some of the sociolinguistic processes at work in this particular contemporary urban site and unique transnational migrant context.

Keywords: Arab-Brazilians, Multilingualism, Cultural identity discourses.