4 The Enregisterment of Hope

> Na escuridão da noite
> meu corpo igual,
> bóia lágrimas, oceânico,
> crivando buscas
> cravando sonhos
> aquilombando esperanças
> na escuridão da noite.
>
> Conceição Evaristo, "Meu Corpo Igual."[1]

4.1 Take *Once* Daily

There is an urban legend in which a man overdoses and dies from his prescription medication, having misread the instruction on the label, "take once daily." According to the story, the man speaks Spanish and, lacking proficiency in English, reads "once" as the Spanish word for eleven and proceeds to take not just one pill a day but eleven. The story, being an urban legend, likely has no basis in truth, of course, and for a number of reasons. Most obviously, if the man were to not know what "once" was in English, he likely would not know the meanings of the adjacent words, "take" and "daily." Besides, one need not be a pharmacist to infer that eleven pills a day is an unrealistic dosage. This anecdote may seem at first glance irrelevant in a book about language and hope in the Brazilian context, not least because such a misreading could not have occurred if it were a speaker of Portuguese, where eleven is *onze*. Yet, the incident, even if fictional, is a reminder that in the real world, language can be for some individuals or communities a matter of life or death.

The precarity of life with respect to language was evidenced globally through the 2020 murder of George Floyd by then Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin, which sparked a wave of protests throughout the United States and around the world. In a tragic moment of recurring

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[1] "In the darkness of the night / my equal body / floats tears, oceanlike, / sieving searches / nailing dreams / quilombo-gathering hopes / in the darkness of the night." Conceição Evaristo, "My Equal Body."

anti-Black hate, criminalization, and dehumanization by law enforcement, Chauvin knelt on Floyd's neck for several moments in an effort to detain him until Floyd was dead. When questioned for being under the influence, Floyd noted that "I ain't do no drugs." Chauvin would later claim he thought Floyd said "I ate too many drugs." One might be tempted to argue that Floyd's use of double negation, a common feature in African American English (AAE), rendered the possibility for Chauvin to misinterpret what he was saying in the moments before his death. Floyd's fate, in this regard, is somewhat evocative of Rosa's (2016) concept of "languagelessness." Distinct from ideologies of language standardization, which merely "stigmatize particular linguistic practice perceived as deviating from perspective norms" languagelessness describes the language-ideological positions that "call into question linguistic competence – and, by extension, legitimate personhood – altogether" of racialized populations (p. 163). In Floyd's case, it is not that his use of AAE rendered him illegitimate and thus disposable by law enforcement; rather, Chauvin attempted to suggest that Floyd's usage of AAE produced a legitimate misinterpretation and a scenario in which a drug-induced suspect had to be forcibly restrained. Of course, the point would be moot, as it turned out Chauvin was in fact fabricating the misinterpretation. Indeed, one can't help but draw comparisons to the 2014 murder of Eric Garner, who declared "I can't breathe" in an audible manner while being held in a chokehold by then New York Police Deparment police officer Daniel Pantaleo. In Garner's case, the usage of a pathologized version of language was not broached as a contributor to his demise, and in both cases, how they spoke or what they spoke was not able to save their lives.

If language can be for some a matter of life or death, is it possible, then, to speak of hope as a phenomenon of enregisterment – that is, as a phenomenon intertwined with the historical binding of communicative forms to their indexical values (e.g., images of person, social organization, social time and social space)? Chauvin, after all, tried to claim that a mere mistranslation in his mind of Floyd's speech was the culprit, not the sheer dehumanization of Black life. Could we propose, then, that the enregisterment of certain speech styles can produce for those from the peripheries an opportunity for hope? This chapter offers a treatment of hope as enregisterment through an extended engagement with *papo reto*, or "straight talk," an emergent register that in favelas has been instrumental in recasting convoluted bureaucratic language in a manner that is legible to those who have not had access to extensive formal education and acculturation to mainstream political communicative conventions, which have historically been deployed to exacerbate racial and socioeconomic inequities in Brazil (see Roth-Gordon, 2017). We analyze instances in which activists have located spaces for the *papo reto* activist register in various spaces, including the official political discursive realm, disrupting a range of exclusionary language

ideologies. The chapter will also draw on other empirical materials that show-case further pragmatic operations of the *papo reto* activist register in the participation frameworks we have ethnographically observed: directness, suspension of face concerns, referential practice of singling out objects of discourse related to racial and economic inequality, and indexically valued tropism (i.e., production of analogues across register repertoires, cf. Agha, 2015). As we shall see, the *papo reto* activist register has emerged as a particularly apt mode of challenging racism and other modes of systemic inequities in Brazil and can thus be viewed as an important linguistic resource for the enactment of hope.

4.2   *Papo Reto* Activist Register

As it has been enregistered and appropriated in activist circles of Rio's favelas, *papo reto* is recognized as a speech style in defiance of socioeconomic inequi-ties, and as a contextual register it may be deployed as a signal of liminality and interactional conflict. In Portuguese, the slang phrase *papo reto* translates into English roughly as "straight talk." In her preface to Claudia Giannotti's (2016) book about production of news by and for residents of peripheries, Renata Souza (2016), a member of Marielle's *mandata* and now a state deputy, offers a definition of *papo reto* that underlines the dimension of directness in *papo reto* activist register. Souza writes that the book "dá o 'papo reto' sobre a comunicação dos trabalhadores, dos favelados. Um papo reto, sem curva ou reticência, é aquele que forma e informa sem 'mimimi', que vai direto ao ponto de interesse: a luta pelo direito à vida e à voz" (it "gives the '*papo reto*' about the communication of workers in favelas. A *papo reto*, without curves or reticence, is that which forms and informs without victimization, which goes straight to the point of interest: the fight for the right to life and voice") (p. 14). Souza's succinct definition does the language-ideological work of assembling tropes (curves, reticence, form[ation], inform[ation], rights, life, voice) that are organized in at least two pragmatic clusters (referential practice and directness of mode) and bound together through linguistic ideology to express a recognizable register. For her, *papo reto* as a referential practice is both performative and constative (Austin, 1962), that is, it respectively "forms and informs." *Papo reto* thus invokes the "right to life and voice" of *faveladas/os* by being direct, that is, by iconically avoiding curves and reticence.

It is worth pointing that (in)directness of mode does not inhere in language but rather comes to be viewed as such vis-à-vis language-ideological work. Wierzbicka (1985) argues that "terms such as 'directness' or 'indirectness' are much too general, much too vague to be really safe in cross-cultural studies, unless the specific nature of a given cultural norm is spelled out" (p. 175). Silverstein (2010) goes so far as suggesting that we abandon directness and

indirectness as theoretical categories, as both doctrines "are descriptive and theoretical dead-ends for comprehending cross-culturally how people use the semiotic resources of language" (p. 351). Our account of "directness" in *papo reto* activist discourse is not about looking for inherently grammatical features of directness but about spelling out a "cultural norm," as Wierzbicka (1985) suggests. After all, *reto* in Portuguese means "straight," or "nonoblique" as in *linha reta* or "straight line." Souza thus draws from the visual representation of a straight path and metapragmatically explains that *papo reto* is direct as it does not stray from the point of interest. Further, for many of our interlocutors, "o papo é reto" (talk is direct), as it referentially does not refrain from singling out economic, racial, and other societal inequities and does so through enregistered emblems of favela lifestyles, such as the centrality of Blackness, laughter, and informality (see Goldstein, 2013).

In the activist circles that operate at the periphery of Rio de Janeiro, as well as in other participant frameworks beyond Rio de Janeiro where the *papo reto* activist register is disseminated – including rap and funk music concerts, social movement meetings, political training courses for leaders and residents, and the growing parliamentary activity of people emerging from favelas – *papo reto* is an enregistered trope that indexes a speaker animator who is an activist or favela resident (or aligns with this role) and who often metadiscursively signals an attitude of defiance toward the normative speech register, legitimated by elite institutions, known as *norma culta*, or standardized Portuguese (Signorini, 2002; Faraco, 2008). As a register (Agha, 2007), that is, a set of recognizable features of discourse that, "by virtue of such recognition, become effective ways of indexing roles and relationships among sign-users in performance" (p. 80), *papo reto* is a composite of nonstandard phonolexical and syntactic constructions that pragmatically indexes identities and social relations belonging in the favelas. Like other registers and cultural styles from the favelas, it also travels to other varieties of Portuguese, and Marielle was especially skilled in combining characterological features of standardized "bureaucratic talk" and those of *papo reto*. This combination lays bare the value of *papo reto* as a metapragmatic framing in discourse. The phrase "*Vou te dar um papo reto*," or "I will give you a straightforward talk," indicates that one will render the conversation in the simplest and most direct way (Facina, 2009). When it is used as a metapragmatic framing within an interaction, *papo reto* thus translates terms of state bureaucracy or other commodified registers into more tangible and everyday tropes.

We should emphasize up front that the *papo reto* activist register has similarities with other enregistered formations of "straight talk," both inside and beyond Brazil, past and present. One of these other metadiscursive formations of straight talk include *dugri* speech commonly used by Sabras (Jews born in Israel). Katriel (1986) describes dugri as an "antistyle" contrary to "the

passive spirituality of Diaspora Jews as well as the elevated rhetoric of the early Zionist visionaries" (p. 25). As Katriel (1986) argues, "[t]he Sabras sought to dissociate themselves from both of these images: neither prayers nor word-spun visions were to be their fare, but rather actions, fact-creating deeds" (p. 25). This being said, Dugri speech is broader than *papo reto* as the former is also an attribute of a person (e.g., "he is *dugri*," i.e., he is sincere); but with reference to the speech event, *dugri* talk and *papo reto* involve the same sense of assertiveness and sincerity, which challenge common expectations about face-work, in other words, they both involve norms of directness and sincerity that may threaten common concerns of politeness that "protect" the face of interactants (Katriel, 1986, p. 11). To a lesser degree, *papo reto* also has parallels with the *vertu* speech style enacted by the political activists in the French Revolution, used to authenticate "the new state and the groups that competed for its control" (Outram, 1997, p. 142). As Outram (1989) argues, the revolutionaries' forms of embodied political action – discourse, clothing, and bodily postures – were designed for "authenticity, simplicity and transparency to the gaze of others," and ostensibly counteracted the exclusionary embodied styles of the Ancién Regime, seen as indexing "artifice, display, and disguise" (p. 156). Marielle drew from these characteristics of assertiveness and contrast to convoluted speech that *papo reto* respectively shares with *dugri* talk and the French revolutionary speech styles. She was born in the favela and knew that upper-class registers may inhibit the poor from gaining access to material resources. She often framed bureaucratic talk as privileging groups from wealthier areas who have access to standardized Portuguese, university degrees, and other public resources. She wrote that the notion of "public" in hegemonic discourses about the favelas often has the "marks of (. . .) use of force and repression, especially by means of police action" (Franco, M., 2014, p. 14). For her, this view "reinforces the predominant belief of favelas and peripheries as locations of absence and deprivation" (p. 14). Instead, Marielle portrayed favelas as "locations of production (. . .) and potency, where residents, notwithstanding the reality of low investments by the State, have invented their diverse forms of regulating and resisting life" (p. 14).

Admittedly, the metadiscourse of *papo reto* has also been appropriated by the far right in Brazil, as Bolsonaro and his allies have often rationalized talking to the point without concern for politeness (see Silva, 2020). Indeed, as Susan Gal (2019) suggests, registers may act as graftings – interdiscursive processes whereby a register taps into recognizable pragmatic operations, repertoires and authority of competing registers, "implanting onto them ways of speaking that convey meanings opposed to the institution's values" (p. 450, see also Borba, 2022). While we have identified that the metapragmatic label *papo reto* is sometimes used by Bolsonarist politicians and activists to name their (or their leader's) public appearances – such as Gabriel Monteiro, a pro-Bolsonaro

policeman, who hosts a series of interviews on YouTube called "Papo Reto com Gabriel Monteiro," or "Straight Talk with Gabriel Monteiro," – we are not concerned with these interdiscursive graftings in this project. While Monteiro's parodies of, and interdiscursive engagements with, favela speech activism are the kinds of moves that readily occur within processes of enregisterment, our interest here lies in describing a sociologically specific and semiotically distinctive register of *papo reto*, whose demographically locatable circuits of discourse authentication, training, and circulation specify both (*a*) the features (noted above) that make the register empirically identifiable (and performable by activists), and (*b*) the stereotypic indexical values that make performances of these features construable as acts of political resistance by those marginalized or oppressed in a country under democratic decline (see Agha, 2007, pp. 190–232; Borba, 2019a; Junge et al., 2021).

Ultimately, the *papo reto* activist register is associated with different yet interrelated pragmatic effects: it indexes belonging in or sympathy for *favelas*. When used in situations of interpersonal conflict, it may contextually suspend expectations of face and, through directness, reconfigure interactions to more participatory grounds. Its referential practice (Hanks, 1990) usually singles out objects of discourse related to racial or economic injustice, and the speaker is opposed to them. In its work of differentiation from upscale registers, it exhibits a "indexically valued tropism" (Agha, 2015, pp. 323–326), that is, at least some of its repertoire units may be perceived by users socialized in *papo reto* as a form of analogy or translation of tropes across phonolexical register repertoires. Further, in a participation framework signaled as *papo reto*, users recognize the co-occurrence of this style with other enregistered speech and semiotic styles for surviving racism and Brazil's dire economic inequality, hence *papo reto* is linked to stereotypical "semiotic values" (Agha, 2007, p. 186) for these users. These different pragmatic effects are grouped together as "the same thing, again" (Gal, 2019, p. 452) and as indexing coherent types of personae and social relations (Agha, 2007) – that is, as a *sociolinguistic register* – through enregisterment, that is, through a sociocultural process that includes (1) the socialization of register users into participation frameworks that relatively stabilize the register's denotational and indexical values and (2) the metapragmatic work of institutions and discourses that reflexively produce criteria, norms, and evaluations for its discursive organization and situate it in the stratified terrain of a society. Gal (2019) explains that enregisterment "is the assembling and conventionalization of register contrasts via a language-ideological process that orients the expectations and perceptions of participants" (p. 453). This chapter is thus invested in explaining the ideological work embedded in people's use and uptake of certain language forms and pragmatic moves as indexing a *papo reto* activist register. Further, it looks to some multiple modes through which those who identify with *papo reto* employ this

dynamic semiotic resource in different arenas of political action toward the demand for hope.

To exemplify one of such forms of resisting violence and stigma through semiotic activity, we examine a video clip where the *papo reto* activist register produces important pragmatic effects. Shot in Morro do Adeus, one of twelve Alemão favelas, "AmarElo" is sung by Emicida, one of Brazil's leading rappers, along with Pablo Vittar, a drag queen singer, and Majur, a nonbinary trans Black singer. Written by Emicida, the song's lyrics "speak of hope, positivity, and overcoming – or bypassing – the hardships of life through faith in oneself" (Facina, 2021, p. 12). Released just months after Bolsonaro's inauguration in 2019, the clip rapidly became a symbol of resistance as it thematizes the "common experience for many Brazilians of living under threat" (Facina, 2021, p. 12). It counterposes despair and hopelessness – iconized, in the opening two minutes and 50 seconds, by a phone call from a depressed young man on the verge of suicide – to the work of hope and a sympathetic view of the peripheral condition. In "AmarElo," *papo reto* contextually emerges as a response to previous experiences of suffering. Below is a fragment of the song that may be characterized as a token of *papo reto* and that ends by referencing the register itself:

Excerpt 4.1 Lyrics of Emicida's "AmarElo" (2019)

Sem melodrama, busco grana	No melodrama, I'm after money
Isso é Hosana em curso	God's plan in sight
Capulanas, catanas	Capulanas, katanas
Buscar nirvana é o recurso	Nirvana is the goal
É um mundo cão	It's a hell of a world for us,
Pra nóiz perder não é opção, certo?	losing is not an option, right?
De onde o vento faz a curva	When the wind takes a turn and you least expect
Brota o papo reto	we'll find the truth

These verses display some of the key features of the *papo reto* activist register. First, metadiscursively, Emicida – who acts, in Goffman's (1981) terms, as speaker author, principal, and, alongside Majur and Pablo Vittar, animator – sings that "De onde o vento faz a curva, brota o papo reto." A literal translation of the verses would read: "*papo reto* flourishes where the wind bends/takes a turn." That is, the "direct" register of conflict resolution in favelas emerges in response to "curves" (i.e., hardship but also avoidance of sorting out problems).

Second, at the lexical but also at the grammatical, prosodic, and deferential levels, the *papo reto* activist register tends to exhibit an indexical valued tropism (Agha, 2015) that works by producing (partial) analogues between semiotic items valued in favelas and those attributed to a purported "standard," such as politeness and circumlocution (often rationalized as "curves"). In this sense, Emicida's production team's translation of "brota o papo reto" or "*papo reto* emerges" as "we'll find the truth" points to this analogical tropism. To "speak the truth" or "to speak of reality," common phrases that repeatedly emerge from our fieldwork, generally amounts to producing analogues of lexical or other pragmatic units (such as politeness) from other registers into nonstandard varieties or locally valued speech forms of conduct. Thus, the Portuguese verses oppose *papo reto*'s pragmatic moves (such as being "direct" and informal) and repertoires to the wind's "bend," alongside a rationalization that *papo reto* is straightforward, without "roundabouts" or "melodrama." Third, the pronoun *nós* or "we" is graphed as "nóiz," thus combining the epenthetic vowel /i/, indexical of nonstandardized Portuguese, and a conspicuous graphic alternant /z/, as a further mark of peripheral identity. In short, Emicida's multimodal text relies on metapragmatic operations of *papo reto* activist register that often, but not always, co-occur: being direct; opposing "convoluted" forms of speech that deviate from the point of interest, especially through indexical analogues associated with peripheral speech; and indexing peripheral belonging, including through conspicuously using tropes of slang (Agha, 2015; Roth-Gordon, 2009) or other pragmatic forms associated with nonstandardized varieties and speech conduct. In other words, Emicida's verses "speak to the point" – they oppose criminalization and despair while valorizing a queer, trans, Black, and *favelada/o* ethos.

4.3   The Dynamics of Speaking and Silencing in the Favelas

As we discussed in Chapter 2, in Brazilian peripheries it is common that the armed management of everyday life is disputed by the police, drug traffickers, and, in some favelas, *milícias*. As indicated earlier, alongside an often conspicuously aggressive treatment of periphery residents, the police have had to accommodate their relations to the retail drug traffic in favelas, which has not only been one of confrontation, but also of "agreements and political exchanges" (Machado da Silva & Menezes, 2019, p. 531; Telles & Hirata, 2007). Between 2012 and 2016, Daniel came to understand the dynamics of silence and speech that had taken shape in the favelas. Being mindful of this dynamic is important because the *papo reto* activist register that we describe occurs when it is "safe" to speak. For a resident, talking about violence – with outsiders or even with neighbors – may be potentially dangerous, as they are

constantly watched by both the police and drug traffickers. Our interlocutors are mostly human rights activists and artists who are somehow an exception to this rule. They are connected to broader networks that may offer them protection and legal aid. But even activists are not immune to scrutiny of (and violence from) the police and drug traffickers. Tatiana Lima (2021) reports that "the vulnerability of Rio de Janeiro human rights defenders, in their confrontation to urban and institutional violence, has reached a peak, especially after the assassination of councilwoman Marielle Franco" (n.p.). This background of tension has been studied by Palloma Menezes and colleagues (Menezes, 2015; Menezes & Corrêa, 2018; Machado da Silva & Menezes, 2019). Based on fieldwork in two "pacified" favelas – Santa Marta and Cidade de Deus – Menezes explains that the dynamics of speech and silence during "pacification" was largely shaped by "investigation strategies" (Dewey, 1938, cited in Menezes, 2015). Experiencing a new dynamic of policing where the police would be permanently present and coexisting with the drug trade, residents resorted to investigative strategies for surviving the "minefield" – an expression that refers to "an imperative of constant anticipation in daily life in 'pacified' favelas" (Machado da Silva & Menezes, 2019, p. 542). These anticipations had the following features. First, they refer primarily to when and how to talk – for instance, when to avoid talking about the police or drug traffic. Second, anticipations involved producing rumors or "informal news" about a new scenario of policing, mapping changes in the territory, and seeking stability in a situation of uncertainty (Menezes, 2014). Third, anticipations relied on using technologies of surveillance at hand – for instance, to film a potential illegal police action and use the images as evidence for pressing charges. Machado da Silva and Menezes (2019) conclude that these anticipations, "contrary to Goffman's brilliant analyses, were not subject to the risk of 'losing face' (Goffman, 1967), but rather of losing one's own life" (p. 542). In other words, for Goffman, everyday face-to-face interactions involve managing the potential threat of harming the face of others and ourselves. And this is why we constantly seek to protect our (and our interlocutor's) face, for instance through polite discourse. In principle, for favela residents, an imminent threat in the "minefield" is losing not one's face but one's own life, since the police could in theory criminalize any resident's utterances as belonging to the drug trade – or the drug trade could frame any such resident as a "snitch."

The remaining case studies that we discuss come from interactions with individuals who have suffered or witnessed such embedding of one's utterances into adverse frameworks. Like Menezes's anticipatory strategies, *papo reto* activist register is also a communicative strategy for surviving "crossfire" and other inequities. Yet *papo reto*'s avoidance of violence differs from the pragmatics of anticipation. People often "dão um papo reto" or "give a straight

talk" – that is, they are direct, suspend expectations of face, and/or translate affirmative tropes – when it is safe to confront the interlocutor. For example, in 2015, M.C. Smith, a funk singer born in Complexo do Alemão, told us that he had recently witnessed an aggressive police reprimand. A resident was barbecuing with neighbors on the sidewalk, with samba music playing loudly from his speakers. A police officer approached him, saying: "E aí, federal, se você não desligar essa porra, vou dar um tiro na sua caixa" or "Hey, *federal* [i.e., the resident], if you don't turn that shit off, I'm going to shoot your speaker." M.C. Smith responded to the policeman: "Por que ele não pode escutar a música dele? Em que situação estamos vivendo? Uma nova ditadura" Uma opressão só pros pobres?" or "Why can't he have fun listening to his music? What situation are we living in? In a new dictatorship? But a dictatorship only for the poor? An oppression only for the poor?"

M.C. Smith gave a *papo reto* to the policeman, that is, he used tropes associated with social justice – namely, the critique on the disproportionally aggressive police approach to *favelados* – alongside "blunt," nondeferential, and straightforward questions. These co-occurring features produce the impression of *papo reto* for those acquainted with this activist register. Yet reports of such confrontations with the police are rare. Indeed, M.C. Smith is a famous singer and has resources for self-protection that other residents lack. However, M.C. Smith's talk itself was criminalized in 2010. Interpreting that some of his lyrics as belonging to the subgenre *proibidão* – or forbidden funk, which spells out the dynamics of the "world of crime" – "incited crime," a judge ordered his arrest alongside other artists (Palombini, 2013). They remained in prison for fourteen days, until the Supreme Court accepted a petition for habeas corpus claiming that their arrest had violated free speech protections (Palombini, 2013). This empirical case suggests that, at the barbecue scene, M.C. Smith was in a more favored position than the harassed resident in giving a *papo reto*. If we look elsewhere, though, we can approach an understanding of the range of social functions produced by *papo reto*.

4.4 "A Língua que Tavam Tentando Me Impor"

To continue with our description of *papo reto*, we explore how Marielle, in a talk at Casa das Pretas, explained how the speech style could be deployed in unequal interactions to assertively demand access to language resources. She recalled a conflictive situation during her college education, when she and her colleague Luana were the only two Black Brazilians in the entire major of sociology at a private university. Marielle said that she engaged with *papo reto* to demand that her professor assign texts written in Portuguese for her class:

Excerpt 4.2 Excerpt from Marielle's Speech at Casa das Pretas, March 14, 2018

na época eu arrumei uma briga com um professor porque tinham bibliografias em inglês. Óbvio que a conjuntura era diferente, a vivência era diferente, a imposição e o que estava em disputa ali também (.) não tinha uma nuvem negra perguntando quantos professores e professoras negras havia (. . .) enfim, a carta, o movimento que a gente fez, ainda nesse momento com relação à língua que tavam tentando me impor, e hoje quando eu te ouço falar Aline, eu tenho uma bolsa na Cultura Inglesa (. . .) há dois anos e poucos eu estou penando com o inglês e acho que a gente tem que ocupar e saber todos esses– o *feminist movement* (.) é– todos os termos e trabalhar e rascunhar no inglês mesmo pra ocupar esse espaço (.) não subverter a nossa cultura mas conseguir ocupar esse lugar.

at the time I got into a fight with a teacher because he had assigned a bibliography in English. Obviously the situation was different, the experience was different, the imposition and what was in dispute there too (.) there was not a dark cloud asking how many black teachers were there (. . .) anyway, the letter, the movement that we made, at that moment regarding the language they were trying to impose on me, and today when I hear you speak Aline, I have a scholarship at Cultura Inglesa ((an English course)) (. . .) I've been struggling for two years to learn English, and I think we have to occupy and know all these– the *feminist movement* ((in English)) (.) yeah– all the terms and to work and draft them in English really to occupy this space (.) I'm not saying we should subvert our culture but to manage to occupy this place.

Making recourse to *papo reto* in this context meant rescaling the default language of Brazilian academia from English into Portuguese (Silva & Signorini, 2021), so that underprivileged students like herself could access the debate. But note that the movement was not static, as Marielle adds that a decade later, she finally had access to education in English. However, in this second political moment, the very access to this commodified idiom became part of *papo reto*. As Marielle puts it, this linguistic resource may allow transnational alliances, which does not simply mean distinction but primarily collaborations that yield the occupation of other spaces.

Imani, a close friend of Marielle's, emphasizes the pragmatic value of *papo reto* as a form of translation. As she told us, the advisors were often irritated by the fact that Marielle would not cite in debates all the items from economic surveys her team produced: "She would go to a debate on economics, we would work hard to write a three-page survey, and Marielle would use only one paragraph. We were outraged." Imani adds, "And the amazing thing was that she spoke only a paragraph and was cheered." Imani's rationalization about

Marielle's conversational performance is that she "connected with people; people saw themselves in Marielle, they felt they were participating." In other words, Marielle's *papo reto* did not only mean using nonstandard analogues to upscale register repertoires; nor did it simply mean the collaborative access to other linguistic resources such as English or the linguistic bureaucracy; it meant that all this could be performed by a Black, lesbian woman from the favela, who in performing these translations and collaborations exceeded her speech at a time when individuals like her do not normally occupy decision-making spaces. For Imani, "Marielle carried on her body the marks of what ought to be said and how that should be said."

M.C. Carol, a singer and songwriter of funk music, offered us rationalizations about the pragmatics of Marielle's (and Talíria Petrone's) *papo reto*. In an interview, she describes the impression she had of Marielle and Talíria in a 2018 meeting, when they tried to encourage her to enter politics. A resident of the favela Preventório, M.C. Carol had already been poetically embedding *papo reto* in her lyrics, translating matters such as the critique of Portuguese colonialism or male domination into registers accessible to favela youths. She told us that Marielle and Talíria defined their *papo reto* along these lines: "Cara, você tem que ir, você tem que bater o pé na porta," or "Dude, you have to go, you have to try kicking the door open." Here, *bater o pé na porta* (kicking the door open) means being assertive, straightforward, and determined, thus forcing one's way into the field of political domination. In relation to the style of *papo reto*, M.C. Carol recalls that Marielle said "eu chego com meu turbante, salto, você tem que entrar, a gente tem que ocupar," or "I arrive in the meeting with my headband and high heels, you've got to enter, we have to occupy." It could therefore be said that Marielle's recourse to *papo reto* had a fundamentally aesthetic dimension: embodied, direct, and most significantly, *directed* toward the inclusion of Black women and social progress.

4.5   "Ah, Você Tá Incomodado com Seu Privilégio?"

For Marielle, *papo reto* was far more than a resource for challenging the hegemony of English in institutional contexts. If we recall from our discussion of Marielle's case earlier in this book, she actively disturbed influential power structures in Rio de Janeiro for her defense of Black women, LGBTQI+ rights, economic redistribution, and especially her agenda on public security, which included tackling *milícias*. In short, Marielle's *papo reto* political style was a source of discontent for the White male majority of the political establishment (Silva & Lee, 2021; Khalil, Silva, & Lee, 2022). Her former aide and now state representative Renata Souza made the explicit association between Marielle's defiant linguistic style and her

assassination. In her book *Cria da favela* or *Born in the Favela*, Souza (2020) writes that Marielle was killed for "raising her voice" (*erguer a voz*): "It is evident that by 'raising her voice' [talking back] – a phrase by bell hooks that symbolizes our transition from objects to political subjects – Marielle Franco challenged the power of the male white elite with ties to the Brazilian *milícias*" (p. 11). Souza thus describes *milícias*'s uptake of Marielle's use of *papo reto* activist register as contributing to her femicide. As the enregisterment of style is not a bounded and isolable pattern of semiotic activity but rather an "emergent patterning ... of co-ocurrent styles" (Agha, 2007, p. 186), Souza also connects Marielle's defiant speech to other Afrodiasporic stylistic models of language and personhood, such as bell hooks's (1989) notion of talking back as part of Black women's conversion from "objects to political subjects" (p. 15).

At the third Seminário Feminista at the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, an event we discussed in Chapter 3, Marielle reported to the participants a conflictive debate in which she reframed the interaction to *papo reto*. She had been invited to discuss city economics along with other councilmember, Leandro Lyra, at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro or the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro also known simply as PUC-Rio. In her speech at this decidedly upper-class space, Marielle told the audience that she had to "give a *papo reto*" to Lyra, a White male economist trained at Rio de Janeiro's elite Instituto Nacional de Matemática Pura e Aplicada (IMPA) graduate school of mathematics, who had refused to recognize the economic effects of Brazil's regressive taxation on the poor. Marielle's signaling that she would from that moment on use some features of *papo reto* as a counter to Lyra's technical economic talk indicates that *papo reto*, like most registers, is a "contextual register of speech" (Agha, 2015, p. 311). For a user, a fundamental metapragmatic knowledge about a register, in Agha's terms, is to know that usually that particular register is not used all the time; in the case of the register of slang, for instance, "to know a slang is to know that it is appropriate only on certain occasions. In this sense slang is a contextual register of speech, and, like every other register, effective competence in the register includes knowledge of when not to use it" (p. 311). Marielle's authoritative competence in *papo reto* therefore included a competence in deploying it when "necessary," in this case when her political adversary produced a metapragmatic attack (Jacquemet, 1994) by using characteriological tropes associated with "standard" political talk (such as parliamentary politeness, cordial racism, and avoidance of discourse topics potentially controversial for one's ideological position, such as "racial inequality" in Lyra's discourse). Here is Marielle's description of the contextual use of *papo reto*:

Excerpt 4.3 Marielle's Speech at the Third Seminário Feminista, IESP/UERJ, May 12, 2017

eu vim com debate das mulheres, o debate das empregadas domésticas, de quem é o trabalhador e a trabalhadora, aí apresentei (.) e aí quando ele foi falar, ele entrou num debate irônico (.) aí eu falei: "é fácil, né, Leandro, citei ele (.) é fácil ser homem branco é:: e tá na PUC e dizer que todo mundo é taxado de manei::ra igual (.) e não falar de toda sonegação (.) e não falar das grandes empresas," enfim (.) fiz essa fala, na tranquilidade, no conteú::do (.) e aí ((Leandro em seguida falou)) "é:: porque já falaram até de homem branco," aí eu tive que levantar literalmente (.) levantei na mesa, assim (.) falei, "falaram não, Leandro, quem falou fui eu," é porque, ainda mais sendo vereador né? parece que você mantém assim- você tá xingando mas é assim: "excelência" ((ela fala sorrindo, para imitar o uso de honoríficos enquanto se xinga alguém na câmara)), não vai fazer ((esse papo convoluto)), galera, na boa, não vai, aí eu falei: "falaram não, eu tou na mesa, tou debatendo," mas aí (.) a casta do direito, "você está interrompendo," e eu falei: "estou interrompendo sim porque ele foi irônico e eu me permiti o direito de interromper," porque eu tou do lado dele, porque ele não faz referência à pessoa: "Marielle fez uma referência a mim enquanto homem branco, eu não sou, eu sou sei lá" (.) eu falei: "por quê? isso é xinga-mento?," não entendi, "ah, você tá incomodado com seu privilégio? tá assu-mindo teu problema da branquitude?"

I presented the women's debate, the domestic workers' debate, I explained who is the male and female worker (.) and then when he was speaking, he started an ironic debate (.) then I said: "it's easy, isn't it, Leandro? I quoted him (.) it's easy to be a white man and yeah:: to be at PUC and say that everyone is taxed e::qually (.) without talking about all the tax evasion (.) and without talking about the big companies" anyway (.) I made that speech, with tranquility, with con::tent (.) ((and then Leandro said)) "we::ll someone spoke even about white man," then I literally had to stand up (.) I stood up at the table, like this (.) I said, "someone spoke, no, Leandro, I'm the one who said it," it seems like ((in parliament)) you keep- you have to curse like this: "your excellency" ((she mocks the use of honorifics when councilmembers are cursing others)), he's not going to this ((convoluted talk)), folks, for good, he's not, then I said, "someone spoke, no, I'm at the table, I'm debating," but then (.) the law caste, "you're interrupting," then I replied: "I'm interrupting because he was ironic and I allowed myself the right to interrupt him," because I'm next to him, why can't he reference the person: "Marielle referenced me as a white man, which I'm not, I don't know what I am" (.) I said, "why? Is that a curse?," is that a slur? I don't understand it, "oh, are you bothered by your privilege? are you assuming your problem of whiteness?"

Marielle reports that, initially, she "made [the] speech with tranquility, with content." That is, her initial conversation was not in *papo reto*. Yet upon hearing Leandro's impersonal reference to her ("someone even spoke about white man"), Marielle decides to rescale her talk to the *papo reto* activist register. She first signals the public about her suspension of parliamentary deference: "Then I literally had to stand up, I stood up at the table, like this. I said, 'Someone spoke, no, Leandro, I'm the one who said it.'" Uncomfortable with Leandro's ideological work of making herself invisible, Marielle intentionally displays several layers of face suspension: she interrupts Leandro; she "literally [stands] up at the table"; and she deliberately avoids parliamentary politeness, namely, by refusing to use the honorific pronoun *Vossa excelência* (your excellency) – a politeness marker commonly used by councilmembers in their public address to fellow members. While explaining to the audience that councilmembers use *Vossa excelência* even when cursing other members, she reassured them that she would have not allowed Leandro protect himself in the guise of parliamentary politeness: "He's not going to do [this convoluted talk], folks, for good, he's not."

In addition to suspending face concerns, Marielle rescales Leandro's misrecognition of his own condition into the speech level of progressive identity politics. In her rationalization of the metapragmatic conflict, Marielle suggests that her appeal to *papo reto* meant denaturalizing Leandro Lyra's White, male, upper-class condition. She asks her adversarial colleague, "Why [are you bothered that I call you a white man]? Is that a slur? I don't understand it. Oh, are you bothered by your privilege? Are you assuming your problem of whiteness?" At this point, Marielle's rescaling of the interaction to *papo reto* means that she was confronting not just parliamentary politeness but also "cordial racism" (Turra & Venturi, 1995). As discussed in Chapter 2, *cordial racism* is a specific manifestation of racial domination in Brazil. To be racially cordial means to "downplay racial differences that might lead to conflict or disagreement" (Roth-Gordon, 2017, p. 3). Under cordial racism, race relations are brought into private or humorous spheres (Sales Jr., 2007), while speaking publicly about racism or racial inequality is forbidden. Thus, Marielle's comment that Leandro was appalled about her reference to his being a White man indicates that he perceived a violation of the requirement to remain racially "cordial." Through the *papo reto* activist register, she challenges this imperative to remain silent about racial domination; simultaneously, she brings to the surface Leandro's indexical attempt to speak with an unmarked voice, "from nowhere," which for her conceals "privilege" and further legitimizes inequality. Later in the debate she explains to her audience that "Leandro is a PhD student in mathematical economics at IMPA, but he reads economic data without reading the reality." Significantly, Marielle adds that alongside his unproblematizing of whiteness, the refusal to *papo reto* undergirds the modus

operandi of Leandro's caucus in the city council, which has supported Bolsonaro, known for his open defense of white supremacy. In Marielle's words: "[it's] a modus operandi that is proper to whiteness, that doesn't relay the *papo reto*, that won't sort out the questions and the polemics."

4.6   *Fogos Virtual*

We now examine a typical metapragmatic move in the *papo reto* activist register: the production of partial lexicogrammatical analogues across registers (Agha, 2015). We explored earlier the case of M.C. Smith questioning a police officer in *papo reto* by rendering human rights discourses into blunt, direct questions with wording that indexes enregistered forms from the favela. Marielle, in confronting Leandro Lyra, somewhat similarly refused to abide by the metapragmatic norm of "cordial racism" and instead invoked a confrontational stance and a lexical repertoire associated with racial justice. It might be said that M.C. Smith and Marielle both engaged with "lexicogrammatical tropism across register boundaries" (Agha, 2015, p. 320) by specifically rewording units from repertoires of other registers and metapragmatic stances (such as being polite or remaining silent in the face of societal/racial injustices) into lexicogrammatical semiotic forms recognized as belonging in *papo reto*. Here, we draw from a 2015 interview with Mariluce Mariá and Kleber Souza, partners from Complexo do Alemão who have become recognized in the neighborhood and beyond (see Maia, 2017; Silva & Maia, 2022). Their activism includes a remarkable ability to mobilize residents through digital media. They use digital communication technologies to monitor police wrongdoing and to map violence. During the interview in 2015, they called their social media posts informing residents about gunshots *fogos virtual*, or virtual rockets. As a further mark of their *papo reto* stance, the name of their strategy was relayed to us in the nonstandard: *fogos virtual*. Unlike standard Portuguese, which marks number agreement through plural inflexion of all lexemes in the noun phrase (e.g., *fogo-s virtuai-s*), nonstandard Portuguese nonredundantly inflects only the first element with the plural morpheme /-s/ (*fogo-s*) while omitting it in subsequent lexemes /-Ø/ (*virtual-ø*). As they explained to us, virtual rockets are a strategy of communicating the state of security to residents, embracing a trope whose basis is a pun on the rockets that used to be set off by drug traffickers to signal that the police were entering the favela.[2]

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[2] In 2015, raids were less common, as the police were permanently patrolling in the territory. Yet more recently, under Claudio Castro, a Bolsonarist leading the executive of Rio de Janeiro, violent raids have become more frequent. As we discussed in Chapter 2, under their leadership, the Rio de Janeiro police have conducted some of their deadliest raids in history.

As virtual rockets are resources for protecting residents from crossfire, they bear a family resemblance to *papo reto*. Virtual rockets are as cleverly concise as *papo reto*: their point of interest is warning residents about an immanent moment of insecurity. An interaction between Kleber Souza and Mariluce Mariá describing the phenomenon of "*fogos virtual*" presents a metapragmatic explanation of their *papo reto* activist discourse:

Excerpt 4.4 Mariluce Mariá and Kleber Souza Talking at the Museu Nacional de Antropologia (UFRJ) about *fogos virtual*, May 14, 2015

MARILUCE MARIÁ: porque a gente virou fogos virtual, assim, "tá dando tiro aqui, melhor subir por outro luga::r," "olha, não sobe por aqui que tá dando tiro," "cuidado com não sei ao::nde" é:: sempre tinha que dar uma opção para pessoa voltar pra casa, nossa preocupação era mais essa (.) e aí começou, depois da Copa, então ((escalou))

((7 min 5 sec. minutes omitted))

KLEBER SOUZA: então, o que a gente faz? a gente consegue alcançar as pessoas tanto dentro da favela como de fora da favela, por que que a gente consegue? porque a gente usou a linguagem que as pessoas entendem (.) a gente busco::u uma linguagem que está ao alcance- não adianta eu falar lá que, ah:: "nós vamos fazer a desmilitarização da polícia," ninguém vai entender nada, entendeu? a gente sabe da importância desse tema, sabe da importância do conhecimento teórico, mas lá as pessoas não têm esse conhecimento, muitas pessoas são desprovidas e eu sei disso (.) têm dificuldade de fala, dificuldade de escrita, dificuldade de entender a linguagem até, às vezes, que vem em algumas páginas que a gente sabe que quer ajudar o Alemão lá e eu não critico (.) e por que a gente se sobressai sobre essas páginas tudo? porque a gente quer falar aquilo que é:: o Gregório, lá do bar, entenda, que nunca foi numa escola, ele tá no nosso XXXX [plataforma de mídia social] o tempo todo, o cara comprou um celular pra ficar no nosso XXXX [plataforma de mídia social], é inacreditável um negócio desse, é você ser parado na rua e a pessoa falar assim, "olha, sabe aquele dia que você postou que tava tendo tiro lá na Praça do Cruzeiro? eu não peguei a Kombi, vim andando pelo beco, entendeu, mas eu não peguei a Kombi e a minha colega falou que passou o maior perrengue lá na (.) Praça do Cruzeiro, a Kombi parou, não teve como subir, foi um tiroteio imenso, tal, tal, tal" [. . .] e as pessoas vinham, sabe? fazendo os mais diversos tipos de pedidos inbox pra gente como se a gente fosse (.) uma voz que ela não tem, a gente tem pedido aqui desde (.) remédio pra dor de cabeça até uma casa (.) no XXXX [plataforma de mídia social]

MARILUCE MARIÁ: e já conseguimos casa também ((risos na sala)) a gente só não consegue pra gente porque a gente não pede pra gente, mas já conseguimos já, já sim

KLEBER SOUZA: é, é uma história muito forte essa história, me emociona bastante

MARILUCE MARIÁ: lembra aquele barraquinho de madeira que tem lá nas Palmeiras? Então, a pessoa foi e apadrinhou a meni::na (.) a Alessandra, e (.) queria dar a casa pra família dela morar [. . .]

Excerpt 4.4 (cont.)

KLEBER SOUZA: nós conseguimos, para você ter uma ideia, com esse XXXX [plataforma de mídia social] (.) chegar até Stanford, nós conseguimos chegar é:: nos principais jornais do mundo, todos os correspondentes, <u>todos os correspondentes</u> dos jornais do mundo, a gente não fala inglês, não escreve inglês, os caras se comunicam com a gente pelo:: pelo Google Tradutor, a gente fala pra eles, <u>correspondentes de todos os jornais do mundo mesmo,</u> nós estamos até com um agora do Japão, que veio, teve ontem lá na favela, vai voltar, já teve <u>várias vezes</u> já na favela com a gente, ele falou que não tem confiança de entrar em favela nenhuma do Rio de Janeiro, só entra com a gente lá do Complexo do Alemão, <u>o Tafumi,</u> é:: e agora a gente conseguiu <u>muitas e muitas e muitas coisas</u>, acho que, talvez, se a gente fosse presidente do Brasil a gente não conseguiria (.) pra você ter <u>ideia</u> (.) um diretor da Casas-Lojas Americanas entrou em contato com a gente uma vez, sem se identificar, e falou, "não conheço vocês, não sei quem vocês são, para mim, não me importa, mas o que eu vejo aí é verdade, eu quero doar para aí 500 cestas de natal"

MARILUCE MARIÁ: we became virtual rockets, I mean, "there's shootings here, you'd better take another rou::te!," "look, don't come up here, there's shooting," "careful about that street!" yeah:: we had to always give options for the person to go back home, our main concern was this (.) then, after the World Cup ((it escalated))

((7 min 5 sec. minutes omitted))

KLEBER SOUZA: so, what do we do? we can reach people both inside the favela and outside, why do we get to do it? because we used the language that people understand (.) we tried to use a language within people's reach- it's no use saying, "we are going to demilitarize the police," no one will <u>understand it,</u> you see? we know the importance of this theme, we know the importance of theoretical knowledge, but people there don't have this knowledge, many people are deprived, and I know this (.) they have difficulty in speaking, difficulty in writing, and even difficulty in understanding the language of some webpages that we know want to help the Alemão, and I don't criticize them (.) and how do we get to differentiate ourselves? because we go on saying in a way that li::ke Gregório from the bar, who's never been to school, <u>understands it,</u> he's on our XXXX [social media platform] all the time, he purchased a <u>smart phone</u> to be on <u>our XXXX [social media platform]</u>, it's unbelievable, sometimes you're stopped on the street by someone who says, "hey, do you remember that day that you were posting about the shootings at Praça do Cruzeiro? <u>I didn't take the van, I came walking through the alleys,</u> <u>you know, I didn't take the van</u> and my friend said that it was very messy at the (.) Praça do Cruzeiro, the van stopped, there was no way go get on it, then there was the shooting and such" [. . .] so a lot of people came, you know? They were making requests to us as if we had (.) <u>a voice that we actually don't have,</u> some people ask us everything from (.) a headache pill to a house (.) on XXXX [social media platform]

> **Excerpt 4.4** (cont.)
>
> MARILUCE MARIÁ: but we actually once got a house ((laughter in the room)) we didn't get one for ourselves because we don't ask for us, but we've got one, yes
> KLEBER SOUZA: yes, it's a beautiful and moving story
> MARILUCE MARIÁ: do you remember that wooden shack in Palmeiras? Someone sponsored the gir::l, Alessandra, and (.) wanted to give her family a house [. . .]
> KLEBER SOUZA: just so you have an idea, with this XXXX [social media platform] (.) we were able to reach Stanford, we could reach hmm::: the main newspapers in the world, all correspondents, all correspondents from the newspapers in the world, we don't speak English, we don't write in English, the dudes talk to us through hmm::: Google Translator, we speak with them, correspondents from all the newspapers in the world, we have one now from Japan, who came, he was yesterday in the favela, and he's coming back, he's been many times with us in the favela, he said he's scared of going to any favela in Rio de Janeiro, but he enters the Complexo do Alemão with us, his name is Tafumi, hmm::: and we've got so many and many things that we think that if we were perhaps president of Brazil we wouldn't get them (.) just so you know, once a director from Casas-Lojas Americanas once got in touch with us, without identifying himself, and said: "I don't know you, but it doesn't matter, I see that you speak the truth, I want to donate these 500 family food baskets"

At least three aspects of their calibration of *papo reto* through indexically valued tropism are worth unpacking in this excerpt. First, Kleber suggests that a key metapragmatic strategy in *fogos virtual* is the "use of a language within people's reach." Following this comment, he adds that other social media profiles have not achieved the reach of virtual rockets because Complexo do Alemão residents have, in his terms, "difficulty in writing . . . in reading [and] in understanding the language of some webpages that we know want to help the Alemão." Note that Kleber invokes one of the terms identified by Silverstein (1996) in his characterization of the ideology of monoglot standard – the assumption that users of nonstandard varieties would not do the best denotational work of pairing word and referent, hence their cognitive inferiority – but at the same time he says that he "[doesn't] criticize [residents] for that." Pragmatically, to facilitate the dissemination of virtual rockets, Mariluce and Kleber therefore produce analogues across register repertoires. Thus, they are able to say "it's no use saying, 'we are going to demilitarize the police,' no one will understand it, you see?" That is, virtual rockets partially work through calibrating messages within nonstandard lexicogrammatical analogues, "within people's reach." We should add that their calibration of messages from one register to another goes beyond the mere transfer of

denotational content originally enunciated in the standard into its indexical "equivalent" in *papo reto*. This indexically valued tropism is "transformative" in the sense that it builds on indexicality's layer of entailment (Silverstein, 2003), that is, performativity: the transference of language from merely referential to the productive and ontological. Silverstein says that translating stands for "inherently transforming . . . cultural material in the source text that has indexically entailing potential realized in context" (p. 95). Thus, Mariluce and Kleber calibrate their *papo reto* activist discourse in such a way that "Gregório at the bar" understands it – and changes his conduct (Kleber says that "Gregório purchased a smart phone to be on [their] XXXX [social media platform]"). Other entailing/performative effects of *papo reto* are exemplified here as well: some people reported being protected from crossfire by reading their messages on social media; one person was given a house, and 500 families were helped with food baskets because of their mediation work; the couple made their translating practice reach international newspapers and even Stanford University, where Mariluce talked about her social work (see Souza, M., 2014).

Second, their translation activity on social media evidences the fundamental aspect of relaying (Gal, 2018) in enregisterment. As Gal explains it, "a register acts as a 'relay,' triggering uptakes across arenas recognized by participants as institutionally distinct" (p. 12). As registers exist in circulation, relaying is crucial to their growing or shrinking across semiotic encounters (Agha, 2007). In terms of Kleber and Mariluce's ethnopragmatics, the efficacy of *papo reto* is directly dependent on multiple uptakes, each indexing a particular arena of social action. For instance, in line with *papo reto*'s major association with protection from violence, residents' uptake of virtual rockets helps them navigate Complexo do Alemão under safer conditions. Alongside the cultural understanding that *papo reto* is a language resource for fixing long-standing inequities, the uptake of institutional actors like Lojas Americanas, a large department store in Brazil, may entail aid to residents. Further, the uptake of international news correspondents and universities facilitates the relaying of the *papo reto* activist register beyond Brazil. In this arena of circulation, *papo reto* activist register grows as an enregistered emblem of protection from crossfire, redress for necessity, and recognition of ethical and affective dispositions of *faveladas/os*.

Third, this interaction signals a diachrony. In the conversation turns, sequentially, Marluce says that they *became* virtual rockets; Mariluce and Kleber both point to pragmatic effects that have *emerged* from their communicative practice in social media; Kleber comments on the *growing* audience of their *papo reto* – both in the neighborhood and in global arenas. That is, they are not speaking of a static feature of their discourse – an already existing and fixed register – but of a process of becoming, more specifically the ongoing process

of enregistering *papo reto* as a particular association of semiotic values with signs (Agha, 2007, p. 80). The becoming of their discourse into an authoritative arena of *papo reto* becomes all the more evident in Kleber's comment on voice: "So a lot of people were doing requests to us as if we had a voice that we actually don't have." *Voice* here, we might say, figures to stand for authority and communicative reach. Kleber seemingly doubts that their *papo reto* has such an authoritative pragmatic efficacy – which would otherwise allow them to meet people's demands with "everything, from a headache pill to a house" – but Mariluce immediately repairs his comment by joyfully saying that, indeed, they "actually once got a house" (to which everyone in the room responds with laughter).

4.7   Conclusion

The *papo reto* activist register, we might say, has been undergoing the process of enregisterment toward meaningful social change and stands for, by extension, a compelling instance of the *enregisterment of hope*. In this chapter, in particular, we have described the *papo reto* activist register as an assemblage of metapragmatic operations and distinctive pragmatic effects grouped together as a "register" – that is, "a repertoire of performable signs linked to stereotypic pragmatic effects by a sociocultural process of enregisterment" (Agha, 2007, p. 80). It has come to be recognized in social circles in Brazil as a type of talk from the peripheries that performs different yet interrelated operations: it may be deployed as a metapragmatic marker of liminality through which the speaker announces that the talk will be rescaled into a "direct" frame. Contextually, it entails suspension of face concerns and recourse to a speech level that displays alignment with favela lifestyles. Its favored referential practice is about singling out objects of discourse relating to racial, economic, and other societal inequities. As a register of slang, it often exhibits cross-repertoire tropism through lexicogrammatical analogues recognized as nonstandard or as breaking from a metapragmatic habitus associated with the upper classes. Of course, as we saw in the case studies, a speaker does not necessarily need to perform all these pragmatic operations to produce *papo reto* activist discourse. Ultimately, though, its utterances exhibit a co-occurrence style with other enregistered speech forms and semiotic practices in Black activist circles in Rio de Janeiro and other cities in Brazil, and thus *papo reto* constitutes an enregistered style of enacting hope for people acquainted with this register and potentially beyond these participation frameworks.