

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE POWER OF LOCALITY AND THE USE OF ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY OF NON-TRANSLATION IN THE PORTUGUESE BLOGOSPHERE

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1. (We)blogs and the Blogosphere

Allegedly christened by Jorn Barger in December 1997 (Hewitt 2005, 67), the “weblog” is listed by the *Oxford Dictionaries Online* as a noun originating in the 1990s. Weblog is identified both as a blend of (world wide) web + log, and as the full form for the more widely used abbreviation “blog”. Besides its use as an abbreviation for the noun “weblog”, the search for “blog” also returns its use as a transitive verb, to which the derivational noun “blogger” is also added (used both for the software enabling the creation of such websites and for the blog author[s]).

The *Oxford Dictionaries Online* define (we)blog as an online regular record of incidents or “a personal website or web page on which an individual records opinions, links to other sites, etc. on a regular basis”. These websites “display in chronological order the postings by one or more individuals and usually have links to comments on specific postings”, as stated by *The American Heritage Dictionary of English*. According to *Netlingo. The Internet Dictionary Online*, as an “open forum communication tool” blogs are used to self-publish or “post” e-journal-like entries, and have three main types: blogs that post links to other sources, those that compile news and articles and those that provide a forum for opinion and commentary.

In the beginning of 1999, Cameron Barret published a list of about a dozen such websites as provided by Jesse James Garrett and Peter Merholz

who sent him the data they had been collecting (Hewitt 2005, 67). Currently, as stated by *Netlingo. The Internet Dictionary Online*, a new weblog is created every second of every day, which causes the number of blogs to double in size every six months. In the 2003 BloggerCon Conference at the Berkman Center of Harvard Law School, Perseus Development Corporation estimated that 4.12 million blogs had been created in eight leading blog-hosting services (Hewitt 2005, 68), although more than half of them seemed to have been abandoned. Advertised as the world's first and largest blog search engine, *Technorati* currently indexes 1 247 714 blogs in its directory, profiling this “new arm of the fourth estate”: the blogosphere, also known as blogland, blogistan, blogspace or blogdom.

Despite announcements that the presence of English in the World Wide Web is declining, the internet still is a notorious channel of interference for the currently hegemonic lingua franca: English. In the opening session of the EMT-2010 conference, Piet Verleysen, acting Director-General of the Directorate-General for Translation of the European Commission (DGT), stated that the presence of English on the internet is waning due to multilingualism and translation. English use on the internet seems to be down to less than 40 %, when it used to be 80 % a couple of years ago (Verleysen 2010). How such numbers are obtained, how categories are defined and whether hybrid language use is also considered are just a few questions that seem worth further research in Intercultural and Translation Studies. This article reports on an exploratory study of the use of English—as chief hegemonic language in our contemporary globalized world—in the Portuguese blogosphere.

2. The Portuguese Blogosphere

2.1. Is it a “blog” or a “blogue”?

Considering the sway of English over today's globalized world, even the name used in Portuguese for this particular type of webpage is revealing in this regard. The authoritative database *Vocabulário Ortográfico do Português* (Ortographic Vocabulary of Portuguese, VOP),¹ publishes a list of loanwords, where “blog” is included, without any type

¹ The Vocabulary of the Portuguese Language (VOP) is developed by ILTEC (the Institute for Theoretical and Computational Linguistics) under the scientific direction of Margarita Correia, and is available online as part of the *Portal da Língua Portuguesa* (Portal of Portuguese Language: <http://www.portaldalinguaportuguesa.org>).

of adaptation to Portuguese spelling rules, and without mention to any Portuguese equivalent. This foreignizing loanword is interestingly used side by side with the alternative domesticated version “blogue”, again a loanword but in this case adapted to Portuguese spelling. If we carry out a fairly basic popularity ranking by using Google search for the use of both “blog” and “blogue” in Portuguese websites, the Portuguese preference is unequivocal: “blog” has 1 600 000 hits, whereas the Portuguese spelling of the loanword “blogue” only amounts to 606 000. Such a tendency is also mentioned by Freitas *et al* (2003) as characteristic of Portuguese mass media, which in a distinctly foreignizing pattern tend to uphold the foreign spelling of loanwords.

Searching VOP for related words and expressions, it does not list the derivational Portuguese verb “blogar”, although it shows 46 700 hits on Google in Portuguese sites. It does list “postar”, which shows 267 000 hits on Google and can also be used for the verb “post”, although these figures also combine its reflexive use for “purposely standing somewhere”, “postar-se”. VOP includes “bloguista” for “blogger”, two words that return 5 310 and 228 000 hits on Google in Portuguese sites, respectively. Interestingly, VOP does not include the use of “post” defined as the name used for texts published or posted in blogs, although it is used 6 600 000 times together with the word “blog” in Portuguese websites.

2.2. Portuguese blogs and blog names

The Portuguese Media Group Impresa publishes an online popularity top of Portuguese blogs (available at <http://weblog.com.pt>), which currently includes 2 341 blogs ranked by Blogómetro [Blogometre] according to the average number of daily visits. Considering the 100 list heads, 23% of these Portuguese blogs either have an English-only name (8 %) or include English words and expressions (15 %). In the top 100 list of Portuguese blogs, those with English names include: “obvious”, “Extralive.TV”, “Portuguese Celebrity Girls”, “Bestcine”, “Henricartoon” or “Freesoft”. Portuguese blogs whose names include English words are, e.g., “Jogos Online”, “Futebol Live”, “Blog da Mulher Feminina”, “Twilight Portugal”, or “LOL Tuga”. Only three names in the top 100 include words in other foreign languages, e.g. “Cachimbo de Magritte”, “De Rerum Natura” or “Ndrangheta”.

2.3. Titles in a Portuguese blog

This article selected for analysis the list of post titles by the Portuguese blog “É tudo gente morta” ([Everybody is Dead], available at <http://etudogentemorta.com>), which is devoted to inspiring (mostly dead) people. In this forum for commentary and opinion, all fourteen bloggers are metaphorically buried in the cemetery when they start posting. Posts include texts, figures (ranging from photographs and paintings to X-rays), video clips, songs, music excerpts, and everything else that fits the editorial line, which encompasses: music, football, religion, sex, painting, literature, anthropology, politics, economy, mathematics, science, philosophy, trivia, and love, as published in an online introduction. Posts by the Deceased are also devoted to gastronomy, personal preferences and hatreds, pop culture, porn, news headlines, travelling, and original fiction. With such a wide range of topics, this blog seemed a good candidate for an exploratory study to assess the use and influence of English in the Portuguese blogosphere.

Language	Full title	Part of title	Total
English	111	127	238
French	10	10	20
Latin	14	2	16
Italian	11	2	13
Spanish	5	2	7
German	3	2	5
Brazilian Pt.	1	3	4
Asian languages		2	2
Danish		2	2
Arabic		1	1
Chinese		1	1
Dutch		1	1
Greek		1	1
Hebrew		1	1
Icelandic	1		1
Japanese		1	1
Russian		1	1
Total	156	159	315

Table 11-1: Presence of foreign languages in post titles by Etudogentemorta.com (1.1.2010—30.6.2010)

Table 11-1 shows a quantitative analysis of the presence of foreign languages in post titles. It considers all 964 posts published from January to June 2010, and shows that Portuguese-only post titles account for 67.32 % of this total, which means that 32.68 % of post titles resort to foreign languages. Within this percentage, English is present in 24.69 % of the total number of post titles. English also accounts for an impressive 75.56 % of the 315 totally or partly foreign post titles.

As stated, the numbers shown in Table 11-1 identify a clear majority of English among other foreign languages used in post titles. List heads also include French and, perhaps surprisingly, Latin and Italian. These figures may be explained by personal preferences (6 and 5 in a total of 14 Latin titles are by two bloggers) or perhaps also by the current location of some of these Portuguese bloggers (8 Italian-only titles are by one blogger, in a total of 11 including Italian).² Consequently, the use of sixteen foreign languages in these titles profile a considerably (not only quantitatively but also qualitatively) open Portuguese culture. The hybrid nature of cultural references in this blog is portrayed by the use of foreign languages in post titles but even more so in the published posts. An interesting analytical task would be to carry out a quantitative and qualitative study of the use of foreign languages in the texts of posts as well as the use of links, quotations and allusions considering not only titles but also and especially post texts.

Allusions—generally defined as “reference to something” (Leppihalme 1997, 6) or as a mediated form of intertextuality (Nord 1991)—were also found, though excluded from analysis, in a few post titles considered for this survey. Titles such as “As Flores do mal” [The Flowers of Evil], or modified allusions as in “A minha montanha mágica #2” [My Magic Mountain #2] offer a fertile ground for the analysis of intercultural interference. Since this article focuses upon the unmediated use of foreign languages and foreign language patterns, within these three examples only “#2” was considered a token of the use of English, since the Portuguese convention for cardinal numbers is “n.º” followed by the cardinal. However, the either regular or modified allusion such titles make to famous literary works portrays a further degree of mediation within intercultural interference which though not considered in this article deserves further study.

² As stated in the introductory note “Sobre o Blog” (“About the Blog” available at <http://www.etudogentemorta.com/>), this is a “nomad blog” whose bloggers, though mostly located in the triangle of Lisbon, Cascais and the Algarve, also live in the USA, Italy and Brazil.

3. Understanding and Explaining Non-translation in Portuguese Blogs

In an influential article entitled “The Politics of Non-Translation: A Case Study in Anglo-Portuguese Relations”, João Ferreira Duarte proposes the concept of “non-translation, in its different guises both textual and cultural”, which takes place either by omission or by repetition. Non-translation by omission is defined as “zero replacement” or non-replacement of a source text item by “a corresponding item in the target text, regardless of whether or not it is to be compensated for elsewhere”. Non-translation by repetition takes place when “a lexical or syntactic item in the source text is carried over unchanged into the target text” and is convincingly identified with cases that “often reflect the uneven relations between cultures” (Duarte 2000, 96-97). The following five categories suggested in the article correspond to different motivations for non-translation and are: language closeness, bilingualism, cultural distance, institutionalized censorship or ideological embargo, on which the article then focuses by considering the reception of Shakespeare in Portugal in the last quarter of the 19th century.

The category of non-translation applicable to the use of foreign languages and especially English in Portuguese blogs is repetition or “non-translated transfer”, given the alternative of translating such words and expressions into Portuguese. However, it is upon the possible motivations for such a non-translation strategy as well as upon a subcategorization of this phenomenon that this article will focus.

3.1. Ideological embargo vs. linguistic/ideological infatuation

As stated, the Portuguese blog under analysis shows a considerable percentage of English-only titles for Portuguese language posts, as well as the use of English words and expressions. It also shows the interference of English spelling and even syntactic order rules. Let us consider two examples. The title “Prelúdio para vuvuzela tenor” [Prelude for a Vuvuzela Tenor] shows an English (or also German) word order by using the noun “vuvuzela” as modifier before the head “tenor”, whereas the unmarked word order in Portuguese would probably have the head “tenor” post-modified by a prepositional phrase such as “de vuvuzela” [of vuvuzela]. Titles such as “Passar a Outro e Não ao Mesmo” [Pass it on to Somebody Else not to the Same Person] apply an English-language rule on the use of capital letters to a Portuguese-language title. The Portuguese

spelling rules would recommend the use of initial capital only (Passar a outro e não ao mesmo).

A first explanation for both the high percentage of fully or partially English-language titles as well as for these perhaps subtler forms of linguistic interference suggests a seemingly unquestionable reflection of asymmetrical relations between an Anglophone hegemonic culture and the Portuguese target one, “owing to cultural, economic or political ascendancy” (Duarte 2000, 97). Following the linguistic rights rationale one might even speak of linguistic oppression and imperialism, as a result of globalization.³

In terms of the value systems involved in these particular forms of non-translation, though, such a high percentage of titles resorting to English might be classified as the opposite of ideological embargo. Non-translation by way of repetition in these titles might be due to what might be called linguistic/ideological infatuation, as this article suggests. The use of international languages becomes attractive, on the one hand, as a means of accessing transnational spaces, networks and of course elites. Indeed, some languages or some resources allow mobility across situations. Just as prestige varieties allow mobility across a considerable range of situations, so the prestige of foreign languages and especially English may be considered a “high-mobility resource” (Blommaert 2010, 12). On the other hand, the use of English also becomes an attractive way of signalling belonging to such coveted prestigious groups. Just as the use of the new communication technologies offers “shortcuts to globalization” and to living a globalized life (mostly or only) open to the contemporary elites, so does the use of English seem to symbolically mark that one belongs to that elite club of educated and culturally proficient global citizens inhabiting the Portuguese blogosphere (Blommaert 2010, 3).

However, there may be more to it than meets the eye. The use of the deterritorialized language of globalization by excellence may also bear the mark of the local belonging to a restricted group: the bloggers that publish in this particular Portuguese blog. The use of the global is of symbolic value for the local, signalling the difference between leading globalized or

³ The expression “linguistic imperialism” was initially suggested by Robert Phillipson as a subtype of cultural imperialism and is nowadays used to refer to a set of political and ideological views in opposition to the fact that English has become the world’s dominant language, or, in Phillipson’s words, to the fact that: “The British Empire has given way to the empire of English” (Phillipson 1992, 1). For further information and a different stance on “linguistic imperialism”, see e.g. Crystal 1997.

un-globalized lives. It is within the local repertoire that especially English shows such high indexical value.

3.2. The power of locality and the use of English: indigenized linguistic hegemony or vernacular globalization 1.0

To pursue this analysis, Jan Blommaert's 2010 work *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization* proposes a sociolinguistics of mobile resources which may prove helpful. Following John Gumperz, Dell Hymes, Erving Goffman, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, and Gunther Kress, Jan Blommaert proposes "an approach that looks at linguistic phenomena from within the social, cultural, political and historical context of which they are part; [...] and one that so examines language in an attempt to understand society", and adds that "[a]n ethnographically formulated sociolinguistics, seen from that angle, is a critical social science of language" (Blommaert 2010, 3). Stressing the historicity and the stratified nature of the spaces in which language use "gives you away", the author purports to analyse the use of English also in its potential for local identity formation.

But before going into the author's proposal, let us first consider the series editor's foreword, a threshold to the text, where Salikoko S. Mufwene mentions the need to rethink the use of English in a globalized polycentric world:

Some hegemonic languages, chiefly English, have spread world-wide but have not only become "global" but also indigenized, both adapted to new communicative habits and subjected to local norms. Consequently, their market values are not universally identical across national borders; in fact, not even within the same borders. It is more and more a question of whose English it is and where it is spoken. These factors determine [...] what social representations their communication in English conjures up of the speaker or writer. (Mufwene 2010, xi)

This indigenized use of English is, therefore, subject to local norms, corresponds to specific culturally determined market values and seems to be used not necessarily with a main communicative function but first and foremost as instrumental in projecting a distinct and (in the case of the blog under analysis) a distinguished social representation of the speaker or writer. As Jan Blommaert suggests, because language is not unaffected by globalization, new forms of individual and societal multilingualism give evidence of the use of apparently the same phrases from the same language, which because they are used in different settings actually may

correspond to different ethnographic values. This approach, presented as a sociolinguistics of mobile resources, constitutes an interesting rebuttal of popular theses about English linguistic imperialism. As the author states: “Mobility is the rule, but that does not preclude locality from being a powerful frame for the organization of meanings” (Blommaert 2010, 22). For the purpose of understanding non-translation, the power exerted by locality in the use of globality may deserve further attention.

Mastering a standard variety (say standard Portuguese) allows for mobility across situations. In the case of the corpus of blog titles under consideration, this article suggests that using albeit “little bits” of the current lingua franca allows for conjuring up the high indexical value associated with high spatial mobility in a globalized world. To a certain extent, this may also be associated with the concomitant communicative and cultural competence attributed to the initially 19th century prestigious profile of the cosmopolitan, educated, well-read, wealthy traveller, later to develop into its more recent democratized version, the tourist. Or as Jan Blommaert might put it these little bits of English as “translocal” “deterritorialized” forms signal the currently high indexical value of high spatial mobility associated with globalization:

We now see that the mobility of people also involves the mobility of linguistic and sociolinguistic resources, that “sedentary” or “territorialized” patterns of language use are complemented by “translocal” or “deterritorialized” forms of language use, and that the combination of both often accounts for unexpected sociolinguistic effects. (Blommaert 2010, 4-5)

This use of English in otherwise Portuguese texts may also be interpreted as “jumping scales” or “outscaling” as a power tactic: it means lifting a particular issue to a scale-level which may be inaccessible to others, from the local use of Portuguese to a translocal use of English, the current lingua franca and language of globalization by excellence (Blommaert 2010, 36). In this regard, the use of idiomatic expressions not familiar to the average speaker of English as a foreign language may even be more effective.⁴ This may also be interpreted as a token of Arjun Appadurai’s (1996) notion of “vernacular globalization”, presented in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* and defined by

⁴ For that matter, the high percentage for the use of Latin or Italian in post titles may even be a more interesting case in point, though not to be covered by this article.

Jan Blommaert as “forms of globalization that contribute to new forms of locality” (2010, 32). As this article suggests, such instances may be classified as vernacular globalization 1.0. defined as the translocal use of English because of the high indexical value locality correlates with them, as tokens related to high spatial mobility in a globalized world.

3.3. Globalized bits of language: indigenized linguistic hegemony or vernacular globalization 2.0

However, and interestingly, this use of especially English as a high-mobility resource with a corresponding high indexical value does not leave it unchanged: locality changes the very language it exhibits. Paradoxically, the local use of a high-mobility resource turns it into a local resource, which may also contribute for group identity recognition. As Blommaert mentions, this use sometimes causes unexpected sociolinguistic effects. It is not just a matter of changed language because of varying market values associated with forms and because of the social representations that people using them thereby create and project for themselves. Foreign-language expressions may be used with meanings no language dictionary would identify, because they are severely indigenized bits of foreign languages. Such indigenized bits of (mostly English) language are sometimes rendered to different degrees opaque by local use, or what Blommaert might call sociolinguistic abuse. This article suggests identifying them as vernacular globalization 2.0.

To illustrate this, Jan Blommaert offers the very convincing example of the use of French for the name of a Japanese rather expensive chocolate shop in an up-market department store in Central Tokio: “Nina’s derrière”. Following Bourdieu’s analysis of language as a market of symbolic capital and power, “the use of French betray[s] an aspiration to considerable *chic*” even if, as the author confesses, he found “the thought of offering someone chocolate obtained from Nina’s bum intensely entertaining” (Blommaert 2010, 29). This is not French, he adds. This word is not used as a linguistic sign: “Its Frenchness was semiotic rather than linguistic.” In a local framework where the linguistic knowledge of French is rare, this sign does not function linguistically (except for the occasional French-speaking visitor). It is rather used emblematically to conjure up a complex of associative meaning related to luxury goods and high indexical value related to “foreignness” and especially “Frenchness” and “chic”. This is what Jan Blommaert classifies as semiotic rearrangement, corresponding to local uses and abuses of sociolinguistic resources, which thus while still global become part of the local:

The bits of language that are globalized are equally bits of culture and society. That means that they always become part of the local, while they are part of the global, and at the end of global processes of semiotic rearrangement we have local usage and abuse of sociolinguistic resources. (Blommaert 2010, 19)

Though by far not as colourful as the example quoted above, the analysis of the list of titles published by the Portuguese blog came up with a similar example. Among several group activities, bloggers were presented the challenge of writing a short story. On May 3rd, one reads the following post and post title:

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Desafio à bloga: escrevam **uma short** neste cemitério

É Tudo Gente Morta | 3 de Maio de 2010

Lançamos um desafio à blogosfera: venham escrever neste cemitério. Sejam também Gente Morta. □ Explicamo-nos: está em curso um desafio lançado pela EV aos co-autores de É Tudo Gente Morta, o de cada um escrever uma short-story tomando como pretexto esta imagem. (my emphasis)

[Gloss]

Challenge to the Blogosphere⁵: write **a short** in this cemetery

Everybody Is Dead | May 3rd 2010

We challenge the blogosphere: come and write in this cemetery. Be Dead too. Let us explain this: a challenge was launched by EV to co-authors of “É Tudo Gente Morta” [Everybody Is Dead], each one should write a short story, using the following image as pretext.

[my emphasis; my translation]⁶

Inspired by the suggested picture, bloggers whole-heartedly accepted this challenge and started posting short stories which, following in the footsteps of this first post, were nicknamed “short”, in English, preceded by a Portuguese feminine marked indefinite article: “uma short” (a[+feminine] short).

This case of non-translation might result from difficulties associated with the problem of finding an adequate alternative Portuguese version for “short story”. First, anthologies mainly published in the 1930s and 1940s did introduce this literary form to the anthology reading Portuguese as “conto” (short story) but sometimes felt the need to modify it with the

⁵ Blogosphere does not mark the same register as “Bloga”, where a very informal nearly slangy use of blog is marked by the suffix -a.

⁶ <http://www.etudogentemorta.com/2010/05/desafio-a-bloga-escrevam-uma-short-neste-cemiterio/> (accessed December 10, 2010).

adjective “moderno” [modern], so as to identify the literary form developed in the 19th century and thus distinguish it from other forms also encompassed by the broad term “conto”.⁷ “Escreva um ‘conto moderno’” [Write a Modern Short Story], though, would lose its punch, also associated with the shortness of “short”.

Second, Portuguese academia has not bestowed its blessing on any Portuguese-language version for the English expression “short story” because both “narrativa breve” and especially “conto”, the most likely national candidate, appear too vague and broad. The latter covers the English “tale” and may also be used for oral, folk tales, and children’s stories. Academics, therefore, tend to use the English “short story”, thus acknowledging the North-American influence and excellence in this literary form and its poetics, and use it preceded by a masculine marked (in)definite article: “o/um *short story*” (see Flora 2003). Here too there is an emblematic nuance to this use, signalling you are conversant with Literature and Literary Theory, and follow the sometimes spoken and recommended (though disputed) rule of using masculine for loanwords.⁸

But most importantly for this argument, is this English? Should you look for “short” in an English language dictionary available in cyberspace, you would not find any helpful definition. You would be left fending for yourself trying to figure out what “short” as an adjective might stand for here (of little or lacking in length, height, distance, quantity or time? Uncivil?) or perhaps toying with the informal use of the singular noun “short” in cinema for a short film—which would make this blogger’s challenge grow into nothing short of a formidable contest.⁹ Of course the choice of “escrevam” (write) in the title disambiguates its use, but only to a certain extent. It surely does not stand for a short (drink), or a short (-circuit). But it is only the following post text that fully disambiguates “short”, because it reads “each one should write a short story”, and

⁷ The Portuguese Publisher Atlântida, e.g., published a collection entitled “Antologia do Conto Moderno” [Anthology of the Modern Short Story].

⁸ However, the gender apparently tends to be attributed to loanwords based on their most frequently used Portuguese counterpart. In the case of “uma short”, the choice of feminine may be originated by its association with “narrativa breve” [short narrative], which is feminine: “uma/a narrativa breve”. It may also be chosen by analogy with the use of the English noun “short” for short film, which in Portuguese corresponds to “uma/a curta (metragem)”, also feminine.

⁹ Only in the twenty-volume print-version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) would you find the use of the elliptical “short-short” for the literary form of the short short story (first used in 1940) (OED, 325) or the countable name “short/s” for short story (used 1912, 1937, 1965) (OED, 330).

consequently the cataphoric use of “short” in the title is easily understood as short for “short story”.

However, this disambiguating move is quickly left behind (or perhaps more accurately down, in a blog) because subsequent post titles just use “uma short”, sometimes in imaginative combinations such as:

- 1) “Uma short short com bibelot” ([A short short with bibelot], Title, 28 June 2010)¹⁰
- 2) “Pleonasmo: uma curta short” ([Pleonasm: a short short], Title, 1 October 2010)¹¹
- 3) “Salta uma short bem fresquinha!” ([Here comes a very fresh short], Title, 4 December 2010)¹²

Either pre-modifying the noun “short” with the English adjective “short” (Example 1), or premodifying it with the Portuguese adjective “curta” [short] (Example 2), or using it within stereotyped expressions (which are thus modified) (Example 3), the creative uses of “uma short” begin to spread in this blog, which may be interpreted as an effect of semiotic mobility, signalling the growing opacity of “short” as linguistic sign and underline its emblematic function as semiotic resource. As used in this blog, “short” is both translocal (an English sign, a clipped version of “short story”) and local (a Portuguese sign).

The power of the locality of this blog, this group of bloggers and their cyberspatial readers exerts a “micro-hegemony” and appropriates the “Englishness” and “foreignness” of “short” in an emblematic use, which also signals belonging to this group. It has become part of the semiotic repertoire of these bloggers and their readership, and has thereby acquired a different function.

4. Final Remarks on a Second Linguistic Relativity

In short, if we consider not language but discourse, language use in context, and how messages are communicated by actual participants in

¹⁰ <http://www.etudogentemorta.com/2010/06/uma-short-short-com-bibelot/> (accessed December 10, 2010).

¹¹ <http://www.etudogentemorta.com/author/ev/page/2/> (accessed December 10, 2010).

¹² This is a twist either on a spoken expression by fishmongers, or ice-cream vendors or on a similar expression applied to a cold drink, probably beer (<http://www.etudogentemorta.com/2010/12/salta-uma-short-bem-fresquinha/> [accessed December 10, 2010]).

specific contexts, then it is not surprising to acknowledge that the same resources used in different contexts may either intentionally or unintentionally convey different messages. This may also happen because of the variable places (and the prestige which correlates with the places) such forms occupy in historically and culture-specific repertoires, which define a second linguistic relativity:

[E]ven if similar features occur all over the globe, the local histories which they enter can be fundamentally different and so create very different effects, meanings and functions. This is an instance of what Hymes (1966; also Blommaert 2005, 70) called “second linguistic relativity”: even when linguistic structures are identical, their functions can differ, depending on the place of the linguistic resources in the repertoires. (Blommaert 2010, 24-25)

Therefore, treading a path that runs opposite the rationale of linguistic rights and English linguistic imperialism, Blommaert suggests we consider the power of locality in globalized uses.

As defined by Duarte (2000), underlying ideological embargo as motivation for non-translation one finds a rationale of English (linguistic) imperialism. However, in a polycentric world marked by globalization, complex forms of mobility and an ensuing super-diversity, new categories seem to be needed in order to understand and explain intercultural communication and (non)translation. This also becomes apparent because Descriptive Translation Studies research projects are often faced with translation solutions that escape the well-trodden binary path of the “here” and “there” of the target and source cultures, because they are neither here nor there, neither fully domesticated here nor fully foreignized there, but rather seem to inhabit an “in-betweenness”, as suggested by Anthony Pym (1998).

Following Blommaert’s proposals, this article suggests the consideration of further motivations for non-translation resulting from value systems at stake in intercultural communication and (non)translation, to be added to the typology initially suggested by Duarte (2000). And it does so within the framework suggested by Duarte (2000) and hopefully as a contribution for the “referential validation of the theory” (2000, 96).

Ideological embargo is a motivation for non-translation resulting from value systems, which constrain intercultural communication because a source item has a low indexical value within a local target culture. This article suggests a further category that is the opposite of ideological embargo. Linguistic/ideological infatuation or vernacular globalization as a constraint for intercultural communication, because a translocal source

item has a very high indexical value within a local target culture. In an attempt to break free from binarism in Translation Studies, this article also suggests vernacular globalization may correspond to different degrees of opacity resulting from the power of locality in the resemiotization of the global involving the abuse of sociolinguistic resources. The examples analysed in this article seem to be instances of a Hymesian second linguistic relativity because their sociolinguistic profile depends on the place they occupy in the local repertoire. As this article has tried to show, these categories seem applicable to the complex in-betweenness of some instances of intercultural communication in a multilingual globalized (non)space of the Portuguese blogosphere, and maybe also beyond it.

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