THE MOBILITY BETWEEN LANGUAGES AND THE FLUXES OF GLOBALIZATION: REVIEWING PARADIGMS, TRANSCENDING PARADOXES

O TRÂNSITO ENTRE LÍNGUAS E OS TRÂNSITOS DA GLOBALIZAÇÃO: REVENDO PARADIGMAS, TRANSPONDO PARADOXOS

André Coutinho Storto[1]
Fabiana Poças Biondo[2]

ABSTRACT: This article aims to raise some general questions related to mobility and the traffic between languages in times of globalization. While defining "globalization" as a set of discourses, we outline some of its internal contradictions and paradoxes as well as the equally contradictory role of the English language as a homogenizing and fragmentary force in this context. Next, taking the perspective of language as socio discursive practice, we situate the multilingual speaker and the interweaving between languages and meanings in a world dominated by intense patterns of diversity and fluxes of people and discourses. Finally, we turn to the context of the bi/multilingual classroom, trying to point out alternatives to monolingual assumptions underlying educational and pedagogical discourses and practices related to bi/multilingual education that prevent us from understanding multilingual speakers in all their complexity.
KEYWORDS: Mobility. Globalization. Multilingualism.

RESUMO: O presente artigo pretende levantar questões gerais relacionadas à mobilidade e ao trânsito entre línguas em tempos de globalização. Ao definir o caráter primordialmente discursivo da globalização e esboçar algumas de suas contradições internas, discutimos também o papel igualmente contraditório

[1] Master in Applied Linguistics, Unicamp, 2015. anstor65@yahoo.com.br.
[2] Doctor in Applied Linguistics, Unicamp, 2015. fabibiondo@gmail.com.

do Inglês como força homogeneizante e fragmentadora dentro desse contexto. A seguir, partindo de uma concepção de língua como prática sócio discursiva, buscamos situar o falante multilíngue e o trânsito entre línguas e significados em um mundo cada vez mais marcado pela diversidade e o fluxo intenso de pessoas e discursos. Finalmente, trazemos a discussão para dentro do contexto da sala de aula bi/multilíngue, procurando apontar alternativas para concepções monolíngues subjacentes aos discursos e às práticas educacionais e pedagógicas relacionadas ao bi/multilinguismo, as quais, a nosso ver, nos impedem de entender os falantes multilíngues em toda sua complexidade.
PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Globalização. Mobilidade. Bi/multilinguismo.

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THE MULTIPLE FACES OF GLOBALIZATION

What we call 'globalization' is best understood not as a vague concept whose meaning we hope is shared by our interlocutors whenever we refer to it: globalization should be best understood as discourse (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2008, p.129; FAIRCLOUGH, 1989, p.206). Or rather, as discourses, representations that overlap, antagonize and complement one another in an attempt to organize and attribute meaning to the times we live in. This allows us to see that, because it is a set of discourses, of ways of representing and constructing reality, what we call globalization is something that is always moving, its meanings and effects are always being disputed. If globalization can mean so many different things, it is because people across the world feel and suffer the transformations and consequences related to it in different ways and, therefore, represent and understand it in different ways: globalization has "different meanings, for different people at different times" (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2008, p.130).

Mobility is a recurrent theme in the discourses on globalization, especially in academic circles. In his classic study *Modernity at large* (1996), Appadurai describes globalization as made up of five types of forces and flows[3] that act throughout the world in a complex, overlapping and disjunctive order (BLOCK, 2013, p.291) and the images of flows and mobility repeat themselves in the literature about globalization far beyond

[3] Briefly, they are: *ethnoscapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes*, *mediascapes* and *ideoscapes*.

the few examples in parenthesis (BLOCK, 2013; FABRÍCIO, 2008; GARCÍA, 2003). Even though it cannot be denied that mobility has always been a predominant force in human history, it is also true that, in the last quarter century, these fluxes and flows have suffered an exponential increase due to, among other factors, the dissemination of digital technologies and the advent of the Internet (KUMARAVADIVELU, op. cit. p.131), the latter being virtually an infinite space where information can circulate at an unprecedented volume and speed.

The model proposed by Appadurai is still useful because it allows us to spot five interconnected domains – and possible general fields of study – around which the transnational fluxes (of capital and goods, of information and knowledge, of people, etc.) articulate themselves. This article focuses on what the author called *ethnoscapes*, the flows of people and the new human, and therefore, cultural and linguistic landscapes originated by and in the current phase of expansion of global market capitalism. More specifically, we wish to problematize questions related to languages and discursive practices in a global context that has English as an immanent linguistic resource. Finally, the discussion is taken to the context of the bi/multilingual classroom, focusing on two crucial aspects of mobility and languages in the age of globalization: the multilingual speaker[4] and the mobility between languages. We start with a caveat about the question of "mobility in the age of globalization" that we would like to keep as a backdrop to our discussion.

MOBILITY AND PARALYSIS: THE SIAMESE TWINS OF OUR TIME

We seem to live in an age where paradoxes have become commonplace. If mobility is considered a constitutive feature of globalization, quite often it is followed closely by its opposite, even though this is not always so evident. In the following random but not disconnected examples, we explore a few contexts and situations where the frantic flows imposed by global, 'digitalized' capitalism can lead to paralysis.

One of the consequences of the hyperconnectivity allowed by the Internet, and which is felt in society at large, is the compression of the notions of time and space (FABRÍCIO, 2008; COUPLAND, 2003; GIDDENS, 2000). In the economic domain it takes shape in the "real time" (of the markets, banking systems, etc.) which reduces the geographical spaces and temporal gaps to an almost unbearable "perpetual present" (GARCÍA, 2003, p.189) in which events that happen on one side of the planet can instantly affect the lives of people living thousands of miles away (KUMARAVADIVELU, p.131). The images, from all over the world, of the hopelessness and despair of the stock markets operators during the 2008 crash have become iconic in the sense that they synthesize the general perplexity in the face of global economic catastrophes over which we have no control whatsoever.

Human relations as a whole have also been affected by the acceleration and intensification of information flows allowed by the Internet. As new information technologies are appropriated by transnational corporations and state institutions, new modes of social relationships[5], characterized by "the distance and the abstraction of

[4] There is no space here for a detailed discussion of the different terms (bilingual, multilingual, plurilingual, etc.) and their connotations. For practical purposes we adopt the term multilingual.
[5] I mean the "tertiary and quaternary" relations, discussed by García Canclini (2003, p. 27).

social bonds" (GARCÍA, 2003, p.27), frequently submit individuals to impersonal, unilateral communicative rituals[6] whose purpose and value are often unclear and that relegate them to a mere receptive role in communicative interactions that eventually prevents them from having an active voice against their interlocutors: immobility is translated into mutism.

At a deeper level, the possibility of unlimited access to and control over the fluxes of information on the web has created yet another type of social relation where individuals are not even aware of being engaged in. The race of the international security agencies for the control, analysis and manipulation of data fluxes (let us not forget Snowden) and the current societal debates on surveillance, privacy, security and censorship on the web reveal the limitations of digital communication in regard to its directionality, intentionality and voluntary participation: we are free to sail the endless oceans of the web, but we have never been so monitored and induced in our trajectories.

The unrestricted freedom of choice and the associated unbridled consumerism, advocated by market capitalism as means of achieving personal fulfillment and a happier and better life tend to lead citizens, especially in the more developed and technological societies, to a state of constant dissatisfaction and inability to make decisions (SCHWARTZ, 2006). However, the paralysis from having too many choices finds its most dramatic counterpart in the (im)mobility of the refugee: the forced mobility caused by lack of choice and that is often met with insuperable oceans, borders and ideologies. In this case, the paradox of mobility in the age of globalization assumes the contours of a nightmare: the refugee is the one who is forced to move against his will and, at the same time, is prevented from doing so. Finally, the frenetic rhythms of global capitalism – and the idea of a new era of universal prosperity associated to them in some discourses about globalization – meet the fixation and the morbid rigidity of fundamentalisms, the real "sons of globalization" (GIDDENS, 2000, p.6).

The aim of these examples is not to paint a gloomy picture of a dystopian future controlled by totalitarian information networks and plagued with unsolvable ideological antagonisms, even though this possibility should not be completely overruled. Our main concern should be with the past and how it can help us understand the dilemmas and contradictions associated with mobility in the present. The following quote by García Canclini offers itself as a good starting point towards this purpose: "What is usually called 'globalization' presents itself as a set of processes of articulated homogenization and fragmentation of the world that reorganize differences and inequalities without suppressing them" (GARCÍA, 2003, p.44).

SYNCHRONY AND DIACHRONY: FROM PRODUCT TO PROCESS

The current phase of expansion of global market capitalism, marked by the dissemination of digital technologies and the Internet, has also affected the domain of languages and their uses. However, the discussions concerning these changes and transformations are quite frequently based on assumptions about what languages are,

[6]The rituals we refer to are a series of situations, typical of digital-algorithmic communication, that can be summarized in the sensation of "talking to a machine", even though this (bureaucratic-administrative) "machine" might sometimes be represented by a human being.

and how they are used, that do not account for the diverse and ever-moving contexts of use and the fluid, unstable discursive practices in which they occur nowadays. (BLOMMAERT, 2010, p.2).

These assumptions – derived from a conception of language disseminated, especially in the Western world, with the birth of modern nations in the nineteenth century and consolidated by the influence of synchronic linguistics in most language studies conducted last century – have been discussed and questioned for quite some time in academic circles (CANAGARAJAH, 2013; HELLER, 2007; BLOMMAERT, 2006; BAUMAN & BRIGGS, 2003; ANDERSON, 1983). As a consequence, a myriad of new terms, concepts and metaphors[7] have been created in an attempt to understand these new contexts and practices. The main epistemological, theoretical and methodological reconceptualizations contained in them can be summarized in a change of focus from 'languages' (as static entities or products) to the 'discursive practices' (as dynamic entities or processes) in which languages occur and also involves placing speakers at the centre of these practices as those who use, adapt and change the available linguistic resources (languages) according to their needs.

When Blommaert (2010, p.143) proposes a "sociolinguistics of mobile resources" as a way of understanding and coping with the complex, fluid sociolinguistic contexts of globalization, he seeks to associate languages with the mobility of people and discursive practices and to bring to light the diversity of meanings deriving from the meshing and blending of language resources. His approach also allows us to see how the patterns of "difference and inequality" (GARCÍA, op. cit.) repeat and reorganize themselves– with regard to the intrinsic value attributed to the linguistic resources of the speakers and to what counts as "language" in specific contexts – in the current global linguistic scenario. The mobility referred to by Blommaert operates both horizontally, through geographical spaces, and vertically, through social scales: the linguistic resources owned by the speakers can either facilitate their movement or act as a hindrance.

A good deal of academic work (CANAGARAJAH, 2013; MAKONI e MEINHOF, 2008; SOUZA, 2003; FENNELL, 2001; KHUBCHANDANI, 1997), provide direct and indirect evidence to the fact that languages have been used as a mobile resource by different peoples throughout the planet for quite a long time. In addition, the pidgins and creoles, the hybrid languages, the complex discursive practices described by Makoni and Meinhoff (2008) – where the very concept of 'language' is destabilized – and even the appearance of new languages add to the argument that speakers, while engaging in meaningful discursive practices, appropriate languages and end up changing them: languages are mobile and moldable resources. In the next section, the focus will be on one immanent linguistic resource in times of globalization: English.

[7] Practically all the current concepts and terms, in the fields of Sociolinguistics, Applied Linguistics and bi/multilingual Education bear, implicitly or explicitly, the idea of movement and flux: "language as a mobile resource", "polycentricity", social scales (BLOMMAERT, 2010), deterritorialization" (APPADURAI, 1996), "translingual practice" (CANAGARAJAH, 2013), translanguaging (GARCÍA, 2013, 2009; CREESE and BLACKLEDGE, 2010), "transidioma" (JACQUEMET, 2005), etc.

THE BLACK HOLE IN THE LINGUISTIC GALAXY[8]

Maybe the contradictions inherent to the "processes of articulated homogenization and fragmentation of the world" (GARCÍA, op. cit., p.44) characteristic of globalization are not felt as intensely as in the case of English. Occupying the hyper central position in the global language system (SWAAN, 2013), English works as a point of convergence for all languages. It is the language of the Internet, of mass entertainment, of international business and finance and the sciences. Knowledge of "the language of globalization" is seen as an indispensable mobility resource in all social classes virtually anywhere on the planet. We can either choose to take a critical stance in relation to the hegemonic role played by the English language in the current global scenario or we can choose not to do so, but we cannot deny its centrality.

On one hand, the ascension of English to the category of global *lingua franca* can be seen as an extension of the imperialistic designs of the hegemonic "superpowers", especially the U.S., and be held accountable for the extinction of many minority languages, contributing, in this way, to the decrease in global language diversity (SKUTNABB-KANGAS, 2000; PHILLIPSON, 1992). This ascension was followed, throughout the last century, by a gradual process of conversion of languages into a product, a commodity (HELLER, 2003) that has a variable price in the global market and whose use and function are regulated by and oriented towards the hegemonic centers. Foreign languages in general, and particularly English, are seen from this perspective not as a natural talent or a communicative resource but as a set of "skills" that can be measured by standardized tests and juxtaposed to the normative patterns of use of the central English-speaking countries. The "industry of language teaching" is a lucrative business that represents a huge source of income – in the production of teaching materials, proficiency tests, exchange programs, etc. – for the countries that have English as an official language (BRITISH COUNCIL REPORT, 2006).

On the other hand, English is a paradigmatic example of a *deterritorialized* (APPADURAI, 1996) and polycentric (BLOMMAERT, 2010) language; a language whose uses and meanings extend beyond the geographical boundaries of the countries usually associated with it and point to different normative and regulating centers[9]. As it is used by millions and millions of speakers throughout the world, English ends up fragmenting and adapting itself to the speakers' communicative needs in situated contexts. Many authors (JENKINS, 2009; CRYSTAL, 2004; KACHRU, 1986) propose different models for approaching the issue of English as a global lingua franca. In this respect, rather than restricting ourselves to a simple "enumerative strategy" (PENNYCOOK, 2010, p.82) concerned with the identification and listing of different English varieties and the internal systemic variations among them (*glossodiversity*[10]), a discursive approach to language use would enable us to address issues related to the appropriation of English by speakers of other languages and the power to validate

[8] We borrow this metaphor from Swaan (2013).
[9] In relation to this topic, it is worth remembering that the number of speakers of English as a second language is far greater than of those who use it as a first language (CRYSTAL, 2004).
[10] For detailed discussions about glosssodiversity and semiodiversity please refer to Canagarajah (2013); Pennycook (2007), Halliday (2002).

meanings and uses that are different and divergent from the centers where it is used as a first language (*semiodiversity*).

This theoretical stance replaces speakers in the center of the processes of meaning making and negotiation while underlining their agency in the appropriation of linguistic signs to such ends. Maybe the statement that best expresses the paradox of the homogenization/fragmentation of English as a global language is the following: "The ubiquity of English is pyrrhic: now that we all speak it, no one remembers its use" (KOOLHAAS, 2008, p.48). In the final section of this paper, this paradox will be analyzed from the perspective of multilingual speakers and the traffic between languages.

MULTILINGUAL SPEAKERS AND THE MOBILITY BETWEEN LANGUAGES

The intensification of contact among people from different cultures and linguistic habits – fostered by mass tourism, immigration, international trade, by the Internet itself, etc – has brought to the fore a particular character who was somehow obliterated by the "sedentary language use patterns" (BLOMMAERT, 2010, p.4) that predominated in most linguistic studies in the last century: namely the bi/multilingual speaker. Although it is difficult to obtain consistent global surveys on language habits, it is possible to say that, at a conservative estimate, at least half of the world's population uses more than one language in their daily interactions (STORTO, 2015; GROSJEAN, 2010, 1982; GARCÍA, 2009). In other words, bi/multilingualism is, and has always been, quite common. In this respect, we should not forget that "multilingual speakers have kept together humanity, separated as it is by so many language barriers" (SWAAN, 2013, p.56).

However, because of the dominant conception of language (and language use) we have been discussing, bi/multilingual speakers are still seen as an exception and their abilities are traditionally conceived and described from a monolingual perspective (GARCÍA, 2013; CUMMINS, 2008; MAHER, 2007), according to which only one language is seen as taking precedence in communicative interactions and in the constitution of speakers. A great deal of the conceptual apparatus developed along the last century to talk about languages and how they are learned – "mother tongue", "native speaker", language "acquisition", "proficiency" – have the underlying idea that human beings are primordially monolingual and that languages are something "out there", separated from the socio discursive practices where they occur and from the speakers who make use of them. The following questions are meant to problematize some of these concepts: Is it possible to have a bilingual "native speaker"? Can a speaker of English as a second language, who manages to communicate by using simple short sentences that do not conform to standard grammatical norms, be considered "proficient"? What do people "acquire" when they learn a language?

The new contexts of language use brought about by the movements of globalization and the global convergence to the learning of the hyper central language (SWAAN, 2013, p.57), have provided evidence of three important facts about communication that somehow have been obliterated by the predominantly "monolingual orientation" (CANAGARAJAH, 2013, p.89): First, human communication transcends individual languages (CANAGARAJAH, 2013, p.209). We will try to be brief by

restricting ourselves to one example: that of *Portunhol*[11]. What the speakers of these two apparently "separate" languages do is to use and combine the communicative resources they possess – resources that, for historical reasons, are very close to each another – in their contextualized socio discursive practices with the main objective of understanding and being understood and, by doing this, they are hybridizing and transforming these resources and creating new means of communication.

Second, communication "transcends languages and involves other semiotic resources, ecological affordances" (CANAGARAJAH, 2013, p.233; KRESS, 2010) and draws on other contextual possibilities of meaning making. Digital communication is a pertinent example, especially if we want to bring the discussion closer to the domain of education, given the undeniable appeal it has over schoolchildren. On a computer or mobile phone screen everything "means": images, videos, icons, music, texts, languages, etc. are constantly interacting and contributing to the generation of meaning. Communication is inevitably multimodal.

Third, (social, cultural, linguistic) meanings are never finished or static, but are always being disputed and (re)built socially: communication is the traffic of meaning. In relation to this, Pennycook (2007) argues that English should be considered as a language that is "always in translation", in which the social, historical and cultural meanings transmitted by the grammar and the lexicon are constantly being transposed and reorganized by the speakers/learners (see also KRAMSCH, 2006). Multilingual speakers are those who engage in this kind of translation. They incorporate the transiency and fluidity of meanings and languages. Gumperz (1982) was one of the first to notice that in many communities of bi/multilingual speakers, a particular manifestation of the shifts between languages, codeswitching, is a phenomenon laden with specific pragmatic and semantic connotations. More recently, a great number of authors and studies have been underlining and giving support to the fact that the movement between languages is a common resource used by multilingual speakers to construct meaning, knowledge and understanding.

In the domain of bi/multilingual education, the term *translanguaging* (GARCIA, 2013, 2009; CREESE e BLACKLEDGE, 2010; WILLIAMS, 1997) has been used to describe the "complex discursive practices" (GARCÍA, 2013, p. 162) in which multilingual speakers engage in (in and out of classroom), practices that transgress e destabilize monolingual conceptions of languages and their use. These practices show that languages are not separate and disconnected systems, but can be used concomitantly in synergy, facilitating the construction of knowledge and the production of meaning (GARCIA, op. cit.; CREESE e BLACKLEDGE, op. cit.; WILLIAMS, op. cit.). However, we should not forget that monolingual ideologies still have a strong influence in educational contexts in general, and more specifically, in the way children learn to be bi/multilingual (MEGALE e CAMARGO, 2015; CREESE e BLACKLEDGE, 2010, p.105). The mobility between languages and codeswitching can be, and quite often are, common practices amongst teachers and schoolchildren, but are "rarely institutionally endorsed or pedagogically underpinned" (CREESE e BLACKLEDGE, 2010, p.105).

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[11] The term "Portunhol" (signifying the fusion of PORTUguese and EspaNHOL, 'Spanish') has different connotations and meanings (REIS, 2009). In Brazil, usually it has a joking, derogatory connotation and is associated with a given speakers' poor Spanish mixed in with lots of Portuguese. In this text, it is used to refer to a hybrid contact language developed on the borders of Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina that blends in different elements from both languages.

In Brazil, the sharp increase in the number of bilingual Portuguese/English schools in the last fifteen years has raised educational and pedagogical issues related to bi/multilingualism (STORTO, 2015). The lack of specific regulation and periodical monitoring by educational authorities (GARCIA, 2011) often leads schools to adopt imported models[12] of bilingual education that frequently do not respond to the needs and specificities of local educational and classroom contexts and that are often disconnected from the "global traffic of meaning" (PENNYCOOK, 2007, p.33). Teachers in such 'bilingual' schools expect their students to participate in and orient, quite exclusively, towards the "national standard language" of particular nations where English is the official language and to the norms of use and meaning attribution from anglophone centers.

The problems and challenges imposed by the exacerbation of the "differences and inequalities" (GARCÍA, op. cit., p.44) arising from the intense fluxes of global capitalism demand an effort that is somehow similar to that made by multilingual speakers. In a sense, they are the ones capable of crossing (cultural, social, linguistic, ideological) borders and barriers in search of comprehension and understanding. Bi/multilingual pedagogies devoted solely to the development of linguistic abilities that fit and conform to central patterns of normativity and do not take into account multilingual speakers in all their complexity. They cast aside the potential for enabling students to engage in multiple forms of meaning making and knowledge building by drawing on and blending resources from different languages and other semiotic systems. In addition, the monolingual orientations that tend to underlie the discourses on bi/multilingual education – and that are felt, for example, in the separation of languages in different parts of the curriculum and in the insistence on imposing monolingual patterns of language use ("in the English class, English only!", "don´t translate!") – might prevent the relativization of the borders between different linguistic systems and cultural values and the healthy renovation and transformation of these same systems and values deriving from the intertwining of the sociolinguistic repertoires of their speakers. Maybe this relativization could be a step towards transcending the paradoxes inherent in globalized capitalism that afflict us nowadays and the "translingual" speaker, its unstable spokesperson.

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[12] For a discussion about "neutral" models of bilingual education see Martin-Jones (2007, p.164).

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