

LANGUAGE HYBRIDIZATION: VIOLENCE OR RESISTANCE?

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RESUMO

Em meio ao cenário multilíngue angolano, a língua portuguesa é representada em discursos estatais, jurídicos e oficiais. O português em Angola, hoje conhecido como “Português Angolano” por ter sofrido diversas mudanças, é denominado por estudos linguísticos de “língua híbrida”, “língua crioula”, “língua sincrética”. Procuramos problematizar a hibridização linguística articulando os conceitos de violência ou de resistência linguística. Por meio da violência linguística, apagam-se as nuances e diferenças das línguas angolanas no sentido em que coloca a língua portuguesa em posição de prestígio e como valor simbólico, tornando-a língua central na cena política. Por outro lado, encontramos na resistência linguística, como a defendida por Glissant, a língua híbrida, que já não é mais a mesma dos tempos coloniais, sofreu e sofre interferências várias que evidenciam a resistência dos falantes dentro das possibilidades que lhes permitam alguma interferência na brecha, no rastro/resíduo, pois atuam na opacidade.

Palavras-chave: Angola; multilinguismo; hibridização linguística; violência linguística; resistência linguística.

ABSTRACT

In the multilingual scenario of Angola, the Portuguese language is represented in state, legal and official discourses. The Portuguese language in Angola, now known as "Angolan Portuguese", underwent several changes and linguistic studies thus refer to it as a "hybrid language", "creole language", or "syncretic language". We seek to discuss linguistic hybridization by articulating concepts of violence or linguistic resistance. Through linguistic violence, the nuances and differences of Angolan languages fade away in the sense that this places the Portuguese language in a position of prestige and as a symbolic value, making it the central language in the political scene. On the other hand, in the realm of linguistic resistance, as argued by Glissant, the hybrid language, which is no longer the same as in colonial times, has undergone and continues to undergo various interferences that show the resistance of the speakers within the possibilities that allow them some interference in the gap, in the trail/residue, because they act in opacity.

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Keywords: Angola; multilingualism; linguistic hybridization; linguistic violence; linguistic resistance.

INTRODUCTION

Angola's linguistic panorama differs significantly from other countries where Portuguese is the official language. With the exception of Brazil, Angola is the territory where the Portuguese language has spread the most. In addition, it has the highest percentage of Portuguese speakers as their mother tongue.

In addition to Portuguese, the country has more than twenty Angolan languages of African origin, called national languages, thus reiterating Fardon & Furniss (1994), who state that "multilingualism is the African lingua franca". Languages such as Umbundo, Kikongo, Cokwe, Kimbundu, Nyaneka, Kwanyama, Ngangela and Fiote² enjoy national language status and some of them have been submitted to orthographic norms. Some of them have also been introduced in schools in the interior of Angola, which now count on bilingual education.

Many Angolan citizens perceive this act of recognition and visualization of the local languages as a sign of ascension and appreciation of an Angolan national culture that had been subjugated and silenced by the Portuguese colonial agents in the period of territorial expansion, undertaken by the Portuguese colonial venture.

The Portuguese language used in Angola is no longer the same as in colonial times. Scholars refer to it as hybrid Portuguese, Creole or syncretic language, but Angolans recognize it as Angolan Portuguese that is not yet standardized. This language certainly no longer conforms to the normative boundaries that govern the official language pattern of Portugal. The notion of linguistic hybridization is usually linked to discourses of resistance. However, care should be taken with the discourses on hybrid languages because such discourses are never only about the language, but also about the people who speak those languages.

1. LANGUAGE HYBRIDIZATION: A FEW SETBACKS

To understand the notion of hybridization, one must consider the colonial power games. For example, in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch settlers put into

²Available at:<<http://www.redeangola.info/especiais/aprender-as-linguas-nacionais-exigencia-actual/>>. Accessed on May 7, 2018.

practice the polarizing concept "we - they" or "Other - other" (BONNICI, 2009). To ensure the "Other's" cohesion when faced with the vicissitudes of the modern world, the colonizer created alienation mechanisms of the so-called indigenous people. Among those mechanisms were submission of their languages and reverence to the colonial language. Hiding among the discourses of language categorization, evident discourses of classification of people were found.

The focus was on the European perspective on the Africans and the creation of the African as the "Other" (SAID, 2011) and, conversely, how this "Other" paradoxically built Europe. From this perspective, the interaction and exchange between the "Other" and Europe can be analyzed in terms of hybridization. From a linguistic viewpoint, according to Makoni et al (2012), hybridization is seen unilaterally, since it only tells how the Africans combined their own social and linguistic practices with those of the Europeans and, in terms of language, produced Africanized varieties of the Portuguese language. However, Europeanized varieties of African languages produced by Europeans are not taken into account. In this regard, language policy initiatives have to be evaluated in contrast to actual linguistic practices, rather than being taken as abstract entities. Moreover, the concept of hybridity may have some limitation as a form of language policy-making in Africa, since it assumes that there are 'pure' African languages and European language codes that are later combined, albeit in varying degrees, to conceive forms of hybridity. Thus, "as an analytical model for African language practices, hybridity is a strongly monolingual ideology, from which one seeks to distance oneself" (MAKONI et al, 2012, p. 524).

2. HYBRIDIZATION AS RESISTENCE

The concept of hybridism found as a form of linguistic resistance in Edouard Glissant's work is also taken as an example. Glissant is an Antillean and a speaker of Creole and French, who discusses the current context of literature in which the relation of poetics to chaos-world can no longer be written in a monolingual way. He explains that in the current dramatic relationship between languages, one should not defend a language in a monolingual way, since "the imaginary of man needs all the languages of the world" (GLISSANT, 2005, p. 44). What the author refers to as multilingualism, however, does not imply the assumption of "the coexistence of all languages and the knowledge of several languages", but "the presence of the languages of the world in the practice of their own language" (2005, p. 45). The author also perceives the need to distinguish between *langue* [the language that we speak] and *language*

[language use], in other words, the relation we build with words, in terms of literature and poetry. He goes on to exemplify the Antillean case, namely:

In the Antillean case, *language* [language use] is the manifestation of our relationship with *langue* [the language], of our attitude towards the world, attitude of trust or reservation, of profusion or silence, opening or closing to the world, adapting orality or comprehension techniques around the secular demands of writing, or of an attitude of symbiosis in relation to all this. (GLISSANT, 2005, p. 46).

His proposition on the transformation of a language, which is no longer the language of the colonizer, points to the unpredictable results of unconscious influences. Such results are made possible by the contact of one language with another, or even consciously, in the aesthetic work with language, coloring it with Africanisms - not through exchanges and linguistic substitutions, but by subtle means - by adhering to obliterations, repetitions which are not dear to that European language, chosen as the official one. The author notes that these changes are a form of resistance present in language hybridization, in the possibility of being multilingual within one's own language. Glissant (2005) also argues that the translator's language is "a true creolization operation; a new and inevitable practice of precious cultural miscegenation; the art of fugue of one language [langue] to another without the first effacing itself and the second renouncing its presence." However, Glissant seems, at one point, to assume that languages exist in unmixed states, reinforcing the myth of the single language:

We need to introduce opacity into the Creole language in relation to French or to destructuralize French in relation to the Creole language so that we can have mastery over both languages, so that we can escape the so-called "*petit nègre*", that is, a rudimentary speech. We must, therefore, strongly construct the originality of the Creole language in relation to the French language and the originality of French in relation to Creole (Creolization is by no means an indefinite mixture) (GLISSANT, 2005, p. 56).

This mixture, however, is not at all defined. There is no exact measure to know how much a language influences another in its processes of contact. No matter how important and relevant literature and the aesthetic work of language may have been to political transformation, their claims about language can still be relegated to the "art world" and to literacy.

3. HYBRIDIZATION: FROM THE AESTHETIC FIELD TO THE POLITICAL FIELD

In literature, according to Bakhtin (2014), relativization of literary linguistic systems signals to the author the possibility of not defining oneself, of translating one's own intentions from one linguistic system to another, of saying 'I am me' in someone else's language and saying, and in my own language 'I am the other.' On the pluri/multilingual possibility of the author in the aesthetic context:

The author is not to be found in the language of the narrator, not in the normal literary language, to which the story opposes itself (although it may be close to one and to another language), but he uses both in order to avoid giving himself up wholly to either of them; he makes use of this verbal give-and-take, this dialogue of languages at every point in his work, to remain **as it were neutral with regard to language**, a "third party" in a quarrel between the two (although he might be a biased third party).(BAKHTIN, 2014, p. 119, emphasis added).

In the case of language policies, however, the status of "world of life" (BAKHTIN, 2014) is considered, and life decisions never play a neutral role. Toward the construction of a democratic nation, language planning should work in such a manner to cause the least harm - be it identity, social or political - to its citizens. Glissant's proposition about hybridity probably favors the relationship of resistance of users of the country's official language, or of those born multilingual. Nevertheless, in those cases, both multilinguals who speak several different languages, or even those who have the Portuguese language as their mother tongue, may see the use of such language as a complex configuration of signs that bring to mind a past of colonial subjection. However, those cases in which the only prominent language is Portuguese and the other local languages are dying out constitute precisely cases of linguistic violence:

Historically, it must be understood that the Negro wants to speak French because it is the key that can open doors which were still barred to him only fifty years ago. In the Antilles Negro who comes within this study we find a quest for subtleties, for refinements of language — so many further means of proving to himself that he has measured up to the culture. (FANON, 2008, p. 50).

Even though linguistics and literature must go hand in hand, the reality of everyday linguistic practices should not undermine the subtleties of the artistic and aesthetic field of literature. Likewise, the playing field of language policy, which deals with the harshness of reality, should not be seduced by the aesthetic and stylized possibilities established by art. In other words, if on the one hand, art points to possible relations of power in the non-fictional

world, on the other hand, the relation between art and life in political terms can also be problematized, since it is only accessible to a minority.

4. LITERACY IDEOLOGIES

There are researchers who hang on to the junction between literary and linguistic aspirations for a greater affirmation of African identity. Ngugi (1986), for example, who is involved in the proposal to implement oral literature (orature) at the University of Kenya, supports the use of African languages as well as their literatures as an initiative to resist Western cultural imperialism, namely:

The language question cannot be solved outside the larger arena of economics and politics, or outside the answer to the question of what society we want. But the search for new directions in language, literature, theatre, poetry, fiction and scholarly studies in Africa is part and parcel of the overall struggles of African people against imperialism in its neocolonial stage. (NGUGI, 1986, p. 106).

Ngugi's idea is guided by resorting to the complete replacement of European influence in elementary education and at higher education, pushing for the curricular duty to teach African studies courses, starting with the literature of African oral languages, here in after referred to as orature, in order to enable a return to traditions without the influence of the Western doxa that British scholars so vehemently tried to postulate:

So, English literature was applicable to Africa too: the defence of English studies in an African situation was now complete. In schools the English language and English literature syllabuses were tailored to prepare the lucky few for an English degree at university. So, the syllabuses had the same pattern. Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and Kipling were familiar names long before I knew I would even make it to Makerere. (NGUGI, 1938, p. 91).

Ngugi therefore proposed changing the curricula of African universities and schools that established English language and literature as a continuation of the Great Tradition. The author explains that the students' first contacts - before even learning about, as Mudimbe (2013) says, the African gnosis, that is, of giving school extension to their own languages, identities, ways of experiencing or facing the world in the independent African nations - were made through a largely British and neo-colonialist curriculum, which propagated, even after independence from the British Empire, an essentially British episteme. Despite being extremely valid and important

in Ngugi's political acts about teaching, care should be taken with the essentials made possible by the ideals of *négritude* and pan-Africanism (SAID, 2011). Such effects may produce, in the opposite situation and contrary to Western colonialism, other invented essentialisms and traditions, but now of African origin. According to Said (p. 326, 2011):

Those who like Ngugi repudiate bourgeois elite culture face the ironic danger of embracing another set of colonial inventions instead. Ngugi himself solves the difficulty by embracing the tradition of Kenyan popular resistance to colonialism. [...] young women and immigrants – the exploited groups with whom Ngugi has sympathy - has sometimes *been able* to tap the continued vitality of the mingled continuity and innovation which resides within indigenous cultures, as they continued to develop underneath the rigidities of codified colonial custom.

Moreover, the resistances present in a context of vertical literacy may emerge in the most varied possible ways, if guided by what Pennycook (2001) refers to as "emancipatory modernism"³. In this regard, Canagarajah (2013) reports his experience as an English-speaking teacher in Sri Lanka. The author reveals issues he had with the teaching material that he used in his classes, which had questionable content and which would possibly lead to an "indirect neocolonization". Such material, intended for the classes that this professor taught, presented images and speeches that subjugated the symbols referring to the student's orientalism, thus establishing an imperialist discourse that attested a certain linguistic and symbolic violence on the apprentice-subjects. However, as he talked to the students about this material, Canagarajah identified a salient critical vision on their part. From then on, he identified a relevant change in the learning of the English language when he decided to embark on a critical approach to the book, also linked to the students criticism of the discourse contained in the material, thus presenting another view of resistance and decolonization, based on a more reflexive view, which also improved the learning relationship of these students with the English language.

According to Severo (2015), literacy ideology - which also serves to create an alphabet for oral languages - helps to confirm a negative social representation of the subjects, besides validating a distinction between urban and rural, such as the "fight against illiteracy" campaigns established by the international policies that use the HDI, Human Development Index as a country's social indicator of "development". Such development is "measured" by criteria like education rates and the "literacy rate" of young citizens. Literacy justifies the HDI, and it is

³Emancipatory modernism, according to Pennycook (2001), though it aims to relate language study to leftist politics, fails in believing that awareness can lead on to emancipation: "This sort of emancipatory modernity suggests that there really is an enlightened state, an ideal speech situation that exists outside the relations of power" (p. 40-41).

used as a criterion by the UN and UNESCO to help distinguish developed countries from underdeveloped ones. This way, "societies with an oral or visual-linguistic tradition are undermined by such categories and analyses, especially since educational literacy initiatives only include languages that have a written form" (SEVERO, 2015, p.54). Moreover, "The illiteracy rate is used to label populations in such a way that their communicative practices are delegitimized or degraded, especially because they are faced with a State whose administrative machinery is based on writing" (SEVERO, 2015, p. 53). Thus, the inclusion made possible by literacy operates according to a functional logic, and it is not, at times, problematized from a political viewpoint. We assume that "plurality is a condition of politics" (ARENDRT, 2007). Accordingly, denial or invisibility of different ways of being in the world leads to authoritarian systems, where something or someone is silent. If, on the one hand, the challenges of literacy are teaching to read and write critically, on the other hand, writing cannot be seen as the transcription of orality. This task legitimizes the decrease of orality and the exaltation of writing, forming a literacy dictatorship that would characterize a form of linguistic violence that establishes new interpretative regimes about what counts as language.

5. LEGITIMATION OF ANGOLAN PORTUGUESE: A POLITICAL ACT

Let us focus on the fact that attitudes about state political decisions and decisions on literacy approaches reflect different levels, even though both constitute linguistic political acts. Because of this assertion, we realize that there are different fields of action for linguistic policies, as well as different agencies of these policies.

The influence of oral languages on the Portuguese spoken in Angola allowed other meetings, which gave rise to the so-called Angolan Portuguese, hereinafter AP. AP is also the fruit of hybridization, of a European language that was "nativized", because it was strongly influenced by the Kimbundo and other Angolan languages (MINGAS, 2000). Although it has not yet been formalized, it only exists informally, according to records made by linguists who seek to legitimize it politically, similarly to what happened to Brazilian Portuguese. Such legitimacy of Angolan Portuguese holds political importance because it thus allows the reflection of local linguistic practices and at the same time to break with the "proficiency" myth, linked to European Portuguese norms. In an interview to Severo (2014b), Daniel Sassuco⁴ shows how a certain vision of the African world is echoed in this hybridization:

⁴ Revista Subtrópicos n°9. Available at: <https://issuu.com/ayrtonsilveira/docs/subtronicos_n09/1>. Accessed on May 07, 2018.

Our scholars, who were educated in Portugal, Brazil etc, do not yet officially assume the existence of Angolan Portuguese. Therefore, we also need solid research, written according to what we are saying, [to] build foundations, which are enough to explain Angolan Portuguese. There are ways to say, there are many things that show our way of speaking, which is very different from others. Foundations to explain the Angolan Portuguese that we have. (SASSUCO *apud* SEVERO, 2014b,p. 6-7).

The hybrid language presents ambivalence in political action: if denied, on the one hand, for reasons based on ethnic conservation and on the processes of cleansing and rejecting the colonial influences of the past, thus establishing a pure and complete Africanization of languages, produces historical invisibilizations. According to Žižek (2014, p.117), "when we reflect upon our ethnic roots, we engage in a private use of reason, constrained by contingent dogmatic presuppositions, i.e., we act as "immature" individuals, not as free human beings who dwell in the dimension of the universality of reason."

On the other hand, if the hybrid language is taken as the overcoming of the former colonialist oppression by the ex-colonized subjects, appearing as the only language representative of national unity and being made official by a state political discourse that only exchanges European Portuguese for AP, it can become a political decision harmful to those citizens who have never had contact with this language, as is the case of those living in the countryside. Such decision, which is not naive (or at least it should not be), strengthens the discourses of power of a small social and economic elite that uses this unique linguistic establishment to perpetuate its position of the highest hierarchy among the subjects. This is done under the main pretext (among others) of promoting literacy and increasing literacy levels in the country.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, if on the one hand the hybridization proposed by literacy processes allows a critical view of non-subjection to colonial imperialism, meeting the subjects needs for this learning, on the other hand, the decision to view the hybrid language as the only official language may appear as a consequence of a state policy that ignores African oral practices or puts them in the realm of literacy. However, we cannot erase this resistance that presents itself as a political claim of Angolan subjects upon their colonial past.

Finally, it is not a matter of considering the linguistic hybridization of Angolan Portuguese, in the colonial context, as a Portuguese that "became dirty" or "degenerated" by

Kimbundo or other languages, thus giving rise to "*pretoguês*" ("black Portuguese"), "dog language", "Musseque Portuguese" (Mingas, 2000) - depreciations that resonate indirectly, through the ideas of right and wrong, or linguistic proficiency. It is a matter of considering linguistic practices as intrinsically linked to those who speak them; thus appreciating their forms of resistance and favouring speakers of those languages. However, discrediting other languages, preventing subjects from speaking them the way they do, is an act of linguistic violence, because the weight placed on the choice of a given language is due to the fact that each language carries a symbolic value.

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