

CONFERENCE THEME B

CULTURE AND CREATIVITY AS A DRIVER OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**CULTURAL HYBRIDISM: ENGLISH LEARNING AND THE DEVELOPMENT
OF A REGIONAL CULTURAL IDENTITY.**

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Abstract: This work intends to review relevant theoretical concepts of cultural hybridism, regarding the study of the English language from the perspective of its contribution to the development of a regional cultural identity, in which the micro-region of Santa Cruz do Sul¹ - Brazil - is located; to evaluate data from the company programmes which give incentive to the learning of English; and to report on the cultural experiences of foreigners (whose English was the initial means of communication) as well as Brazilians from other regions when living in this community.

Keywords: Santa Cruz do Sul, micro-region, transnational companies, English language, cultural identity, cultural hybridism.

INTRODUCTION

Brazil has multicultural characteristics because throughout its history it has witnessed the arrival of settlers and immigrants from around the world.

The settlement process in southern Brazil happened in the nineteenth century, when foreigners from Europe including Italians, Germans, and Polish, among others, were offered land to establish their colonies and occupy specific regions still to be developed.

¹ The micro-region of Santa Cruz do Sul, in this article, consists of the municipalities of Arroio do Tigre, Candelária, Estrela Velha, Gramado Xavier, Herveiras, Ibarama, Lagoa Bonita do Sul, Mato Leitão, Passa Sete, Santa Cruz do Sul, Segredo, Sinimbu, Sobradinho, Vale do Sol, Venâncio Aires e Vera Cruz (The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics – IBGE – 2005).

Santa Cruz do Sul, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, the southernmost state of Brazil, was established as a provincial colony in 1849, and settled mostly by German immigrants.

Since its settlement, its economy has been focused on the production, processing and marketing of tobacco. From the twentieth century onward the municipality has been a reference in the tobacco sector.

During the 1960s, social and economic factors favoured the transnationalization of the tobacco sector with the opening of the international market for Brazilian tobacco. This process resulted in the acquisition of Brazilian companies by transnational companies which continue operating in the region.

Based on the concept of "externalities" of Marshall (1895), a group of companies, in a given region, provide forms of organised production process supported by the economies of scale. They can also take advantage of "external effects" generated by the culture of the place, its history and the need for personal and professional improvement of the actors of that "territorialized particularity", thus bringing benefits to the region and to themselves.

In the case of the micro-region of Santa Cruz do Sul, the presence of the companies has boosted the creation of jobs and businesses, increasing the demand for improved education and creativity of workers. Hence the companies recognize the workforce as being co-responsible for the improvement of products and processes, and there is a requirement for cultural and interactive changes relevant to their management.

The cognitive aspect of the workforce cannot be disregarded, because knowledge and information are relevant, when considering the cultural content involved in the dynamics of productivity.

In the growing globalization of the industry there is shared management, using ubiquitous information systems that permeate society, and which requires a growing mediator format, seen through English.

English is still considered the "world language" because it encompasses and expresses the globalization of modern life; its worldliness preserves other languages inside this "trans-glossary" space, becoming the official language of international relations.

Thus, the interest of the companies to provide and encourage language learning determines an investment in the "actors" of the production process and learning English

has become a focal point within the micro-region with the creation of various schools of English and companies' programmes which encourage and support language study.

With the transnationalization of the micro-region of Santa Cruz do Sul, there was a need to use a mediator language that embraces the two cultures: the corporate culture (global) and regional culture. This dynamics has generated a new mindset towards learning English.

Immersion in learning the English language relates to the fact that a language is best learned when connected to its cultural background: language is a social system, in which we bring out a set of meanings that are already interwoven in its cultural and linguistic system.

Human beings, in this social interaction, have the ability to interpret and make sense of their social action due to various systems and codes that give meaning to their actions and that allow us to interpret the actions of others in a meaningful way. These systems and codes are our "cultures".

Therefore when learning English, there is an interaction of meanings in the life of the community in question, in which culture - the result of this social interaction- is the bond of a set of ideas, behaviours and social practices that transform this community which is constantly reconstructing its identity.

Currently, due to the presence of transnational companies, and considering the cultural mobility which occurs in any dimension of scale, people from different parts of the world come to live in this region, bringing their culture and seeking to coexist and interact with the regional culture, thus providing an exchange of values and experiences that hybridize.

THE SETTLEMENT IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL: THE CREATION OF SANTA CRUZ DO SUL

With the independence of Brazil in 1822, there was emphasis on the colonization of the two southernmost provinces of the country (the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina), which, according to Waibel (1949), were subject to attacks by the Argentine from the south and the indigenous tribe "Botocudos" from within. The huge southern forests of Brazil were the domain of those indigenous people and "whites", in turn, only crossed them on drovers and military trails.

The Luso-Brazilian, the settlers from the Azores and Madeira, did not show interest in inhabiting forest areas. They preferred the open fields for the establishment and administration of their farms with the help of black slaves.

Thus, the new type of settler should be both a soldier and a farmer, to be able to defend their land and cultivate it. This colonizer profile was in Europe, and specifically in Central Europe, where "disengaged soldiers of Napoleon's armies and poor oppressed peasants were ready to emigrate to any country in the world" (WAIBEL, 1949, p. 9).

Seyferth (2002) adds to the reasons for colonization, explained by Waibel (1949), the premise of "white superiority", as a justification for a colonization model with small family farms, based on the arrival of European immigrants. This occurred from the mid-nineteenth century, unlike the large properties with a slave workforce. The author (2002, p. 118) says that the racist content is present in the "discussion of immigration policy articulated for settlements, and also in the nationalists concerns about the problems of assimilation, specified through the probability of the mixing of races", even if little is evident in the laws and decrees regarding colonization.

According to Seyferth (2002), colonization came to be represented as a broad civilizing process and a better structured approach to occupying vacant lands.

It is important to understand that the processes of colonization in Brazil have always been organized, planned and funded by varied interests. Therefore, the methods used and the results achieved vary greatly according to the type of colonization (WAIBEL, 1949).

Referring in particular to the German colonization in Brazil, Etges (1991), says that this was not a spontaneous phenomenon, but the result of complex internal and external factors related to the country, resulting from changes in the capitalist process. The author points out that the colonization and immigration process actually occurred after the transfer of the Portuguese Court to Brazil and the resulting opening of the ports in 1808, allowing for the mercantile expansion of England (the leader of industrial capitalism), which sought to conquer a consumer market.

Thus, the treaties with England, which include the abolition of the slave trade and the idea of free labour, compelled Brazil to seek this new type of settlers, small freeholders who would cultivate forest land with the help of their families with no connection with the use of slave labour, nor with cattle breeding (WAIBEL, 1949).

As a result of needing to seek protection of land in the south – which was subjected to invasion -; the motivation for "whitening" the Brazilian population; and

economic and market issues – related to the capitalist process-, the first colonies in southern Brazil were settled. This study highlights the German colonization of the micro-region of Santa Cruz do Sul.

The first three colonies were subsidized by the federal government, which subsequently changed the immigration policy, in September 1830, forbidding any government expenditure related to the settlement of foreigners in any of the provinces of the Empire. The immigration process was suspended until 1834 when the provinces were given the task of promoting the colonization. However, from 1835 to 1845, due to the civil war, the province of Rio Grande do Sul was prevented from carrying out any settlement plan (WAIBEL, 1949).

It was between 1849 and 1874, when five colonies in the forested slopes of the hills were settled and the colony of Santa Cruz was founded on December 19, 1849, with the arrival of twelve Germans (MARTIN, 1979).

The colonization of the region occurred in the valley (Vale do Rio Pardo) as a result of a decision of the Provincial Government which expropriated lands for this purpose, justified by the abundance of water provided by the rivers of the region, and making it one of the most prosperous colonies in southern Brazil, with tobacco cultivation, the main commercial agricultural activity (MARTIN, 1979).

Etges (1991) notes that the historical approach, described above, is relevant to understanding the increase in tobacco production, because the development of the tobacco crop in the south was due to the presence of German immigrants; to the configuration of small properties; to the increased provincial trade with Germany; and to the fact that some types of tobacco were more successful in their cultivation in southern Brazil, more specifically, in the micro-region of Santa Cruz do Sul.

It is relevant to understand that changes in the Brazilian economic scenario also contributed to this region becoming specialized in tobacco production, which leads, therefore, to briefly explain the creation and transnationalization of companies in the micro-region of Santa Cruz do Sul.

THE CREATION AND TRANSNATIONALIZATION OF COMPANIES IN THE MICRO-REGION OF SANTA CRUZ DO SUL

From 1917 onwards, the restructuring of existing commercial and tobacco processing companies began, driven by the accumulation of capital from commerce, together with international capital coming into the region. The tobacco processing and

cigarette manufacturing industries were established by the wealthy merchants of the time, with enough accumulated capital to transform their businesses, expanding their enterprises and creating their own industries (VOGT, 1997).

Silveira (2003), also relates the beginning of the industrialization in Santa Cruz do Sul closely to the success of its agricultural sector, targeted for export, which stimulated the processing activity of its primary products and allowed the accumulation of capital by local traders, who were also exporters, thus making it possible to install new production units using the latest technologies. It is worth mentioning here that the author includes other industries of importance to the municipal economy, such as food processing and the production of metallurgical and rubber products, although being on a smaller scale and importance.

According to Silveira (2003), the tobacco industry consolidation was also accomplished because of the increased demand for its products that went beyond the regional and national markets to the international markets.

Vogt (1997) explains that many concomitant factors made conditions favourable for the transnationalization of the sector in the region: in the mid-60s, ethnic conflicts in Rhodesia (Africa), compelled British American Tobacco (in Brazil, Souza Cruz) to seek alternative sources out of that country for their supply of tobacco; the opening of the international market for Brazilian tobacco (which became competitive because of its quality and the fact that it met the standards required by the world market); and the Brazilian Government's policy which allowed international investments in the country for the installation of large agricultural industries and the establishment of agroindustrial complexes. At that time, access to international credit was stimulated by the Brazilian Government, particularly for multinational consortia. It is important to note that the anti-democratic and dictatorial regime in Brazil provided security and stability for foreign investment.

In the 1960s, in addition to Brazil, other Third World countries developed their agribusinesses based on the United States of America's model. This internationalization was the result of the increased domination in the production of food and other raw materials by multinationals (VOGT, 1997).

The transnationalization of the sector was a gradual process with multinational companies buying shares in local companies which now operate in the micro-region of Santa Cruz do Sul, which is the pole position municipality.

Silveira (2003) also states that the internationalization of the local tobacco sector plays a decisive role in accelerating the urban growth of Santa Cruz do Sul, and in influencing its economy together with other smaller businesses, contributing to the 'growth of networks' in the municipality.

The presence of these companies, as said before, encouraged the creation of jobs and businesses that are directly or indirectly related to this market sector.

EXTERNALITIES AND CULTURAL REORGANIZATION: A COGNITIVE TURNING POINT

The context, in which a group of companies in a given region, or municipality, providing forms of organization of production processes, leads to the notion of externalities by Marshall (1895), in which economies of scale can also be from "external effects" produced by this setting. These may arise from the culture of the place, its history or from the need for personal and professional improvement of the actors of that "territorialized particularity", and how the companies located in that territory can benefit from and give benefit to them. Marshall (1895) says:

When an industry has thus chosen a location for itself, it is likely to stay there long: so great are the advantages which people following, the same skilled trade get from near neighbourhood to one another. The mysteries of the trade become no mysteries; but are as it were in the air, and children learn many of them unconsciously. Good work is rightly appreciated, invention and improvements in machinery, in processes and the general organization of the business have their merits promptly discussed: if one man starts a new idea it is taken up by others and combined with suggestions of their own and thus it becomes the source of further new ideas (MARSHALL, 1895, p. 352).

Pecqueur (2009) foresees the decline of an industrialized world indifferent to its geographical and cultural context, and he encourages a worldwide reflection on a productive relationship based on the "notion of proximity".

Companies seek to benefit from the territory in which they are located, but for that to happen, they must also value the people who they employ. How this process happened, is not explained here. If, at first, it was principally just for the exploitation by the companies, it is no longer, because of the cognitive turning point (also understood as territorial turning point) when people, or some of them, are aware of their worth and search for quality of life, learning to choose what is best for themselves.

Mattelart and Mattelart (2011, p. 177) explain that (...) "the company is a complete dynamic system, and its globalization is simultaneously both an external and

an internal matter. (...) a global firm intends to eliminate its internal rigid hierarchies and forms of inherited pyramidal authority of the Fordist and Taylorist organizational model, in which the retention of information was the source of knowledge-power; and, intends to adopt a communicative model of administration “through networks”, driven by the need for greater interaction (...) the new representation scheme of the company and the world in which it operates (...) proposes a new interactive model (...)."

The increased use of information technology requires a greater cognitive ability of employees working in the companies. Thus, the interaction is now much more an exchange rather than that of exploitation, because the cultural reorganization of power, referred to by Canclini (2003, p. 345-346), analyses the consequences of this transition from a "vertical and bipolar concept of socio-political relationship to a more decentralized and pluralistic one".

The author (2003, p. 346) goes on to criticise this argument of dualistic and conspiratorial representations of power in which “more developed countries” use technological innovations to accentuate the disparity in relation to countries that depend on them. He says that a broader view allows one to see other economic and political transformations, as a consequence of long-term cultural changes that are generating different approaches to conflicts. Therefore, the representation of opposition between hegemonic and subordinate, conceived as if they were completely different and always a reason for confrontation, is questionable. The classical paradigms can no longer explain the “dispersion of the dominant centres, multi-polarity of social initiatives and the plurality of references - that are derived from several territories” promoted by social actors and mass media.

For the author (2003, p. 347) the terms "hegemonic" and "subordinate" are hard and have conditioned people to establish divisions among men, forgetting the "movement of affection, participation in solidarity activities where `hegemonic` and `subordinate` need each other". He adds that “there is an ideological overvaluation of social relationships; stressing the opposition and not allowing to see the rites that bring people together and share”. The author talks about “a sociology of bars" where we ignore what is said through them, even when these bars do not exist. This mind-set is less evident and perhaps in many cases, embryonic or endemic, but it exists.

Pecqueur (2009) approaches the importance that knowledge and information have as factors of cultural interaction. The cognitive aspect cannot be disregarded taking into account the cultural content involved in the production dynamics.

Benko (1999) states that modern management practices value workers more than in the past. At the same time, workers are required to improve their education and creativity. The company recognizes them as contributors to the development of products and processes for the company's improvement, changing its cultural and interactional management.

Companies seek profitability and results, but in a globalized world there is no room for unilateralism, there must be an exchange, where the global enterprise, the geographical area, in which it is located, and the "actors" all benefit (BENKO, 2002).

With the transnationalization of the companies in the micro-region of Santa Cruz do Sul, bearing in mind the importance of cognitive aspects, there was a need for the use of a language to mediate the company's and the region's cultures: the English language.

Hence there was a growing demand for the study of English, because of the need for a skilled bilingual workforce to meet the requirements of a globalized and computerized world. This generated an "externality" with the creation of a significant number of English Language schools, along with an influx of English teachers in the micro-region, especially in Santa Cruz do Sul.

In a survey undertaken by the British Council (2014) into the demand for English language study in Brazil, results show that the main motivations for studying the language are to improve knowledge and increase job opportunities.

This mentality is reflected in the report from the same agency (2013), which places Brazil in seventh position worldwide, with regards the number of students of English moving to the UK to study the language at one of the 368 (three hundred and sixty-eight) accredited British English schools.

Most transnational companies in the micro-region of Santa Cruz do Sul have programmes to encourage the study of the English language, funding the employees who have positions with a requirement to communicate with the company's affiliates abroad. These are mainly located in the United States, European and Latin American countries, such as Mexico.

However, companies do not have accurate data on the total number of employees who are learning English, and can only provide a percentage related to the number of employees who are funded. This information was provided by the companies by mail exchange for the writing of this article.

It is relevant to say that many employees do not need to participate in the companies' language programmes, because they already speak English fluently, and also other employees finance their own study. Thus the figures obtained do not accurately represent the percentage of people who speak or are learning English in the companies.

Data was collected from both the companies and the local English language schools in an attempt to establish a percentage of people who study the language. This information is subject to revision. Some companies and most schools do not have a specific database containing this detailed information.

The companies surveyed are transnational involved with agricultural products in the micro-region of Santa Cruz do Sul.

The following table gives an overview of the percentage of workers who are learning English.

Table 1. Transnational companies' employees studying English

Company*	Employees in the Language Programme	Employees studying English (without financial support)	Employees already speaking English
1	38%	no company record	high number
2	10.86%	no company record	high number
3	3.10%	no company record	not informed
4	4.20%	no company record	not informed
5	30.8%	no company record	11.5%
6	8%	no company record	not informed
7	11.8%	no company record	10.3%
8	2%	6.1%	20%
9	no programme	4.7%	not informed
10	no programme	4.2%	not informed

Source: author (2015)

* The companies did not give permission to disclose their names, and are identified by numbers. Similarly, most companies did not have the number of employees who are self-financing their studies, and as for those who already speak English, a general reference to "high number" was made, and accurate data was provided as a percentage.

It is observed that, companies that invest in bilingual workers, have more accurate information both of those employees who study with financial support and of those who have already mastered the language.

Company 9, a medium sized company (100 – 999 employees), informed that it does not have a language programme, but annually sends two or three employees to the United States to improve their English, where they also help in the activities of affiliate companies.

The main recognized language schools reported that there is a larger number of adults studying English who work for transnational companies, compared to professionals in other fields. Those with data informed that from 35% to 65% of their adult students are professionals who work for transnational companies. However, other schools do not have these specific data.

Thus, the fact that the companies are concerned to provide and encourage language learning, constitutes an investment in the "actors" of the production process. However, it cannot be said that the companies with a high percentage of employees improving their knowledge are also innovative in their management, seeking a less vertical relationship within the company.

The fact that the transnational companies in the micro-region of Santa Cruz do Sul have language programmes for their employees has generated a new mindset in order to learn English. Therefore the section that follows provides some information about English as a universal language.

ENGLISH: THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

English, in its position as a global language, is spoken by a quarter of the world and provides a true single market for knowledge and ideas. It belongs to the world as it is spoken by more and more non-native speakers, who significantly outnumber native speakers (BRITISH COUNCIL, 2013).

Ortiz (1994) refers to English as the "world language" as it incorporates, and conveys the globalization of modern life and its worldliness whilst preserving other languages inside this "transglossary" space. Its scope extends beyond the borders of Anglophonic peoples, pervading different domains to become the official language of international relations.

Crystal (2003) explains that one of the motivations to learn English is that it provides contact with more people than any other language, even if learning to speak the language requires a lot of effort, and sometimes causes resistance in learning.

Another aspect pointed out by the same author (2003) is the close connection between the command of the language and its cultural, technological and economic power, which is explained, in the case of English, through its history.

According to Crystal (2003):

a language does not become a global language because of its intrinsic structural properties, or because of the size of its vocabulary, or because it has been a vehicle of a great literature in the past, or because it was once associated with a great culture or religion. These are all factors which can motivate someone to learn a language, of course, but none of them alone, or in combination, can ensure a language's world spread. Indeed, such factors cannot even guarantee survival as a living language –as is clear from the case of Latin, learned today as a classical language by only a scholarly and religious few. Correspondingly, inconvenient structural properties (such as awkward spelling) do not stop a language achieving international status either. A language has traditionally become an international language for one chief reason: the power of its people – especially their political and military power (CRYSTAL, 2003, p. 9).

The author also says that the history of a global language can be traced through the success of its expeditions, through the voice of its soldiers and navigators, and English was no exception (CRYSTAL, 2003).

Raffestin (1993, p. 97) when he refers to the language as “one of the most powerful means of identity” available to a population, playing a fundamental role in culture, he is not referring to its linguistics aspects, but he sees language as a “trump”, at the core in relationships determined by power.

The main factors that led English to become the universal language, according to Crystal (2003), are related to cultural reasons, because of the range of literature in English; due to political developments, explained by the growth of the British Empire, making English the official language in the British colonies; and the fact that Britain had become the world's leading nation in trade and industry. Most innovations during the Industrial Revolution were of British origin, which encouraged other nations to learn English as access to knowledge, and also led many entrepreneurs and foreign investors to leave their countries of origin and establish their businesses on British soil.

The history of English throughout this period was of rapid expansion and diversification through innovation, making the language the first or the only means of communication. Crystal (2003), said it is difficult to determine cause and effect of this phenomenon. So many advances occurred and, in the late nineteenth century, English was accepted as the natural choice for progress.

But the growth of the influence of the language through political expansion declined. Much more important for the English language, in the post-war world, was the way in which the cultural legacies of the colonial era and the technological revolution were impacting on an international level. English was then emerging as a means of communication in areas of development that gradually shaped the character of the domestic and professional lives in the twentieth century (CRYSTAL, 2003).

Raffestin (1993) considers language as a resource because he understands that English is the “added value” in most major economic, political, social and cultural relationships, and the means of accessing modern cultural societies as a whole.

The League of Nations, which was replaced, in 1945, by the United Nations, was one the first of many modern international alliances to designate a special place to English in their work (CRYSTAL, 2003).

Another aspect that led to the post-war rise of the language was the increased role played by the United States, through its media industry, in particular, the cinematographic industry, which was responsible for the proliferation of models of social relationships, and its “American Way of Life” enhanced by the products of its economy, as well as by generating its own industrial culture within international relationships producing political impacts (MATTELART, 2005).

Learning English for speakers of other languages has become a reality. Its learning is associated with its social feature, in which a set of inherent meanings related to its cultural and linguistic system is triggered during the learning process. An interaction of meanings in the life and way of being within a community occurs, where culture - the result of social interaction - is the bond of a set of ideas, behaviours and social practices in the constant reconstruction of identity (HALL, 1997a).

LANGUAGE AS A CULTURAL IDENTITY BOND

It is necessary to understand that the construction of meanings occurs through language, through the processes of representation. Representation, according to Hall (1997b) is the way in which meaning is given to depicted things.

Thus, the relationships between concepts and symbols stabilize meanings within different cultures and languages, and say which language has to be used to convey a particular idea. The translatability is the result of a set of social conventions established, i.e. in culture (HALL, 1997b).

For Saussure (1995), a language (as a system) is the social part of language (its use), external to the individual, who alone can neither create nor modify it; it exists because of a kind of contract (culture) established between the members of a community.

Similarly, Hall (1997b) emphasizes that to belong to a culture, is to belong, in general, to the same conceptual and linguistic universe, knowing how the concepts and

ideas are translated into different languages, and how language can be interpreted to refer to or be a reference in the world. From the point of view of reference in the world in a constant displacement of identities, language is the link that generates the feeling of belonging to a culture.

Raffestin (1993) understands that language is a mediator of social and/or cultural relationships and explains that linguistic activities, as well as other activities, are developed within a space and time, i.e. in regions according to their own rhythms.

These spaces in the modern world, according to Hall (2011, p. 47), can also be described as “national cultures in which we are born” and “constitute a major source of cultural identity”. National identity is formed and transformed within the representation. It is the set of meanings that allows one to know what to be “English” is, for example. He reiterates that “the nation is not only a political entity, but something that makes sense – *a system of cultural representation*”. And in this abstract process, people share feelings through which they identify and maintain bonds of loyalty, in a cohesive identity.

Larrain (2003) refers to the idea of “the nation” as the need of individuals for identity, searching for reference within a wider group with whom they share certain characteristics.

It is in this living together, that culture is seen as the sharing of ideas that identify and connect people to a society, a national culture, which Hall (2011), says is not necessarily a unity, but composed of differences that coexist within a constantly transforming nation and world.

Ortiz (1994, p. 137-138) sees national identity as an abstraction which, together with the national memory, is a “project that is linked to the social actions that sustain it.” According to the author, referring to the Brazilian national identity and national memory, these are constructions framed in a fragmented diversity of social groups who retain different memories.

Identity, for Hall (2011), is permanently under construction, it is incomplete, and therefore, it is a process: it is “identification” and it does not exist without a cultural context.

Based on this concept, Larrain (2003) says that culture and identity are intrinsically related because identity can only be constructed from the symbolic interaction with others. Culture becomes a catalyst of meanings embedded in symbolic

forms, linguistic expressions, actions and significant objects through which people communicate and share experiences.

Hall (2011) when he speaks about the postmodern subject, as not having a fixed identity, defines him as “a moveable feast” that is continually changing in relation to the ways he is represented in the cultural systems around him.

This identification process is permeated by a socio-cultural interactive dynamics, resulting in new juxtaposed or crossbred combinations which leads to hybridization and that manifests itself in all areas of knowledge in society (CANCLINI, 2003).

Therefore, language is a key element because it is the mediator in this changing process. It generates the (re)construction of meaning, leading individuals to identify themselves with new perspectives (identities), new behaviours and lifestyles in the various social groupings, creating new cultural expressions (hybrid) that transcend the temporal, spatial, political, social and economic dimensions of social development.

HYBRIDIZATION

These new cultural expressions (hybrid) are the result of sociocultural processes in which “discrete structures or practices” which existed separately, combine to generate new structures, objects and practices (CANCLINI, 2003).

Canclini (2003) states that hybridization can result from unplanned or unpredicted processes caused by migration, tourism, and economic or communication exchanges. It also arises from individual and collective creativity in the arts, as well as from daily life and technological development.

The object of study is the process of hybridization. The empirical analysis of these processes, together with “reconversion” strategies, demonstrates that hybridization interests of both hegemonic and popular sectors want to gain the benefits of modernity. The word hybridization is shaped to name the combinations of ethnic or religious elements, and also the combination of advanced technology products and modern or postmodern social processes. It occurs in historical and social conditions, and because it is a historical and social process it could be explained from the first migrations of civilizations, when these resulted in contact between different communities. The Latin American continent is the territory for the cultural hybridization process for sheltering immigration and migration over the years (CANCLINI, 2003).

Hall (2003) believes that our societies are composed not of one but of many peoples and their origins vary. For him, the individual who migrates or emigrates is hybrid, because when he leaves his land, he becomes different, because he meets other individuals in his new place, where people have other customs and other ways of thinking and acting; they listen to and perform other music, dance different rhythms and speak another language, full of meanings within the social context where it is produced. His customs, rhythms, meanings brought with him are integrated with the local ones, and the cultural hybridization process begins.

Hall (2003), using the Caribbean culture as an example, says it is no longer possible to return it to its authentic elements of origin, because of the complex integration of different cultural elements from other people that merged with it.

The events leading to hybridization processes were not always peaceful: they consist of contradictions and injustices, but the resolution of these processes, according to Canclini (2003, p. 346-347), may be overshadowed if the records are to only highlight the power by confrontation and vertically integrated actions. The author believes that “power would not work if it was only exercised by bourgeois on workers, by whites on indigenous, by parents on children, by media on audience”. There is an understanding that “these relationships intertwine with each other, each achieves effectiveness that alone they would never reach”. The author believes that this does not imply a superimposition empowering forms of domination. What contributes to “effectiveness is the obliquity that is established in the plot”. What matters is the difference between where the power starts or ends in relation to the other, and it is in an intelligent way in the “tangling of the threads” that the “secret orders” infiltrate and are accepted.

The hybridization process of migration, has led to two driving forces: the dominant one which homogenizes culture, and the other that is slowly and subtly decentralizing the Western models, leading to a spread of cultural difference across the globe. These processes are contradictory but they coexist (HALL, 2003).

Canclini (2003, p. 346-347) believes that the hybridizations are now all “border cultures”. All arts are developed in relation to other arts; crafts migrate from the countryside to the city; films, videos, songs that narrate the events of a people are exchanged with others. Therefore, cultures lose their exclusive relationship with their territory, but gain in communication and knowledge.

The idea that hybridization builds a regional cultural identity should boost confidence, facilitate interaction between the native citizens with (im)migrants whilst respecting their differences. It is a process shown by various movements of society; one of them already mentioned is migration. This can be between regions, states, countries, in different scalar orders (CANCLINI, 2003).

Based on these concepts, this work also intends to present the life experience of people who (im)migrated to the micro-region of Santa Cruz do Sul, whose opinions describe their perceptions of the culture within the region where they still live or lived for a period of time.

(IM)MIGRATION: EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

This section presents the results obtained by collecting data using a semi-structured interview technique with nine foreigners and twelve Brazilians from other regions of Rio Grande do Sul State and other states, that (im)migrated to the micro-region of Santa Cruz do Sul.

They were questioned about their understanding of social and cultural aspects that are similar to or different from those in their region or country of origin, and what factors made their integration in the community easy or difficult. They were also asked if the English language had any influence in their interpersonal relationships.

The general data of the interviewees are in Table 2 below, followed by an analysis of the interviews.

Table 2. Interviewees' data

Interviewee	Age	Sex	Period of residence	Reason for moving into the region	Country/state of origin
1	45	F	3 years 2010/2013	Husband's work (TR*)	Argentina
2	27	F	3 months 2015 – to date	Married to a Brazilian (both work for the same TR)	Mexico
3	49	F	4 years 2009/2013	Husband's work (TR)	Greece
4	14	F	4 years 2009/2013	Father's work (TR)	Greece
5	55	F	30 years 1985 – to date	Married to a Brazilian	Japan
6	69	M	13 years 2002 – to date	Married to a Brazilian	England

7	39	M	5 months 2014 – to date	Work (TR)	Turkey
8	69	M	40 years 1974 – to date	Work	Bolivia
9	43	M	2 years 2013 – to date	Work (TR)	China
10	39	M	3 years 2012 – to date	Work (TR)	São Paulo - Brazil
11	38	F	3 years 2010 – to date	Husband's work (TR); also worked for a (TR)	Paraná - Brazil
12	41	F	13 years (interrupted) 1998/2002 2005- to date	Study	Rio Grande do Sul- Brazil
13	39	M	10 years 2005 – to date	Work (TR)	Mato Grosso do Sul - Brazil
14	47	M	18 years 1997 – to date	Work (TR)	Pernambuco -Brazil
15	40	F	7 and a half years 2007 – to date	Work	Rio Grande do Sul - Brazil
16	50	M	8 years 2006 – to date	Work	Rio Grande do Sul - Brazil
17	40	M	10 years 2005 – to date	Work (TR)	Rio Grande do Sul - Brazil
18	42	F	25 years 1990 – to date	Study	Rio Grande do Sul - Brazil
19	34	F	12 years 2003 – to date	Work (TR)	Rio Grande do Sul - Brazil
20	47	M	7 years 2008 – to date	Work	Rio Grande do Sul - Brazil
21	40	M	8 and a half years 2007 – to date	Work (TR)	São Paulo - Brazil
22	66	M	1 year 2014 - 2015	Study	Maranhão - Brazil

Source - author (2015)

*TR – transnational

It is believed that when a person moves from one location to another, the similarities between the two places are absorbed more naturally or not even perceived. The dissimilar cultural aspects are the challenges to be understood, for coexistence.

It is important to note that aspects such as the length of time residing in the area of study, together with the historical-political and socio-economic situation of Brazil, are variables that may have influenced the responses.

Most interviewees moved to this micro-region, motivated by job opportunities in transnational companies (TR) or indirectly related to them, as shown in Table 2.

Because of this, it is important to note that interviewees understand that working in this region, requires discipline, mutual respect, professionalism and determination. For some, among factors that facilitated their integration in this community, there is a close correlation to their work, because of the reputation of their companies, which was associated with the interviewees, making them to be considered as highly regarded and trustworthy.

In the analysis of the interviews, there were similarities in perceptions about the micro-region, irrespective of whether the interviewees were foreigners or Brazilians.

Interviewee 6, who is English, and interviewees 10 and 21, both from São Paulo, commenting on social and cultural aspects, criticize the very low level of cultural activities such as theatre, concerts, art exhibitions, sporting events, etc., approaching aspects from an international perspective. They criticize the lack of good quality programmes in the regional media, which is restricted to local news, soap operas with poor content and programmes with simplistic analysis of international events.

The aspect related to social life, that generated most comments is the importance given to a more intense family life, especially at weekends, rather than socializing with friends. The weekend family reunions have the main meal their typical food and drink (churrasco and chimarrão)² together with German cuisine.

Interviewee 1, from Argentina, sees food and drink as elements of integration, emphasizing them as ways of socialising, comparing the habit of drinking "mate" and eating "assado", common to southern Brazilians and Argentines, irrespective of the name or form of preparation.

Learning to drink chimarrão, and talking about specific issues within the region were pointed out by the majority of interviewees as elements which contributed to their acceptance in the community.

Tradition, seen here as folklore, is also an observed element, and the interviewees understand that the German and gaucho music, played on the radio stations, are intended to preserve the traditions and respect the cultures of the colonizers as well as of the State of Rio Grande do Sul.

Most interviewees from out of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, and from other countries note that their places of origin have more multicultural characteristics compared to this micro-region.

² Churrasco is a style of barbecue; chimarrão, also called mate, is a type of tea prepared with the shredded leaves of *erva-mate* (*Ilex paraguariensis*)

The culture of this micro-region, with emphasis on Santa Cruz do Sul, is seen as more "vertical" if compared to the cultures of other Brazilian regions, in the sense that it has specific cultural references to European ethnicity that colonized the region. There is a clear presence of the German culture in specificity and depth, rich in its elements, such as culinary, verbal language, body language, clothing, architecture, religion, ethics and cultural values.

Similarly, many friendship relationships and ways of getting to know people in the community were established through the practice of sports like tennis and golf, which are international sports. For foreign children, attending school allowed them to make friends. Mothers (also wives), in turn, began to interact with other mothers, having their children as mediators.

There were cases of Brazilians, attending English language schools, who, through the lessons, managed to understand the regional culture and make friends.

The use of the English language was a vital factor for most foreigners to establish communication and integrate into the community.

The language had relevance to facilitate as well as hinder the inclusion of some interviewees in the community, regardless of their country of origin, because the ones, whose mother tongue is Spanish, supposedly alike to Portuguese, faced similar difficulties of communication as did English speaking foreigners, due to the false cognates.

Some foreigners who came to this micro-region around three decades ago, and who speak only English, said that it was not possible to extend their friendship circles, because, for them, most people they would like to have had relationships with, outside the workplace, had no fluency in English.

From this perspective, language can be considered as an excluding factor, as it separates the foreigners, brought by transnational companies, from the community.

However other foreigners, who moved to this micro-region more recently, said that they managed to make friends outside the workplace, finding people who speak English in shops, bars, parties, significantly facilitating their integration unlike the opinions of the foreigners who came in the past.

Others, especially the Brazilians, believe that speaking German³ would have facilitated their acceptance into the community.

Additionally, another important aspect to consider, which contributes to their “isolation”, was that the majority of the foreign interviewees see this regional culture as “reserved”.

The same feeling of exclusion was also expressed by Portuguese speakers, coming from other regions of the State of Rio Grande do Sul and Brazil. For them this was a factor that hindered their adaptation.

One of the interviewees, a doctor, who has lived in Santa Cruz do Sul for forty years, recalls having foreign patients, who felt isolated and showed signs of depression, requiring medication. This “xenophobic” characteristic reflected in the life of this interviewee, who, when he first arrived, also faced difficulties of integration because of his ethnicity. He explains that he achieved his space and respect through his professional competence, which was consolidated after saving the life of an influential person in the community. He also remembers that at the beginning of his career to communicate and be able to assist some patients he needed a bilingual secretary (Portuguese-German). In those times, when he felt lonely, he used to go to the state capital where, according to him, different multicultural features were seen as more “natural”.

Currently, despite a different range of opinions, both Brazilians who come from other regions and foreigners reported they felt isolated. Some attribute this to a "small town" mentality that is reflected in relationships, where appearances, interest in other people's lives, in material things are more valued than having a more open-minded attitude focusing on social interaction.

Others attribute isolation to ethnic prejudice, because one interviewee accredited her German surname as the reason for her integration into the community. At the same time another interviewee said that once she was rejected for a working position for not having a German surname, and added that some Brazilians, like her, who are living in this community, create their own groups of "foreigners" with whom they have a social life outside the workplace.

³ The study of the German language is common in this micro-region, due to the hegemonic ethnic group who formed it. The German dialect is spoken at home and in some social gatherings by both the older people and young ones, mostly in rural areas. Many young children just speak German at home and begin to learn the Portuguese language, only when they go to school, at about the age of six.

The interpretation of the interviews, from the perspective of interviewee 5, who is Japanese, leads to reflect that interviewees mostly gave their opinions from an individualistic point of view (how I have been received, how the community treated me) rather than from a group point of view, by saying, “what I did to join this community”. A justification, perhaps, for this one-sided worldview, can be explained by the fact that the majority of interviewees are Westerners.

Interviewee 5, even having been living in this micro-region, for more than 30 years, sees a sharp contrast between the modern Western cultures which are more characterized by individualism, when compared to the Japanese culture which values the group. The sense of obligation to the group overrides the sense of individual rights. She also said that life in groups requires a lot of harmony. So, for the sake of harmony, the Japanese give up their own opinions; what counts is what the group thinks. Decisions are made in groups and individual opinions are expressed cautiously and are malleable, to avoid conflict.

The interviewee also provides other important data with regard to the social vision of work.

The biggest difference perceived between her life in Japan and in this micro-region is the way people view work: “We Japanese give greater weight to collective life. To be recognized socially as a useful and respected worthy citizen is most important. This is achieved through dedication at work”. In this context, work is not a simple need for survival, but a pleasure to perform and hence be recognized socially. When she was young in Japan, her dream was to see the world and contribute to humanity in one way or another. Here, in numerous contacts with young Brazilians their mentality is; “my dream is to travel the world and have houses at the beach and in the mountains and not to have to work”.

As mentioned before, the period when people (im)migrate contributes to change perceptions. People who came to this micro-region more recently reported that it can be considered as a “paradise”, especially when compared to other parts of Brazil marked by its diversity. Some understand that the region has a higher level in aspects of education, care for the elderly, quality of public services, and the cleaning of public space. The population is considered as being quite reserved, but responds with solicitude when approached, always seeking to help in the best way possible. An interviewee, who is an Afro-Brazilian, said that he did not notice any evidence of

prejudice in this micro-region, even in the face of speculation about racial issues, currently in Brazil.

CONCLUSION

Based on the interviews, there is a noticeable identity fragmentation from the interviewees who have moved into this micro-region and did not express a sense of belonging, visible in the narrative of those who seek to interact just with others also from different places, alleging that they are not able to "mix" with the micro-regional community. However, it can be said that there was hybridization among the members of these groups, as they bring their previous varied cultural experiences, identify themselves by what brought them together, creating new bonds of trust and cohesion.

Intriguingly, some of the same interviewees, who admitted to noticing the "cultural mixing" in their children (born and living integrated in this micro-region with its marked features), disregarded that the change may be already in them, because there will always be new juxtaposed or cross combinations of cultures manifested in various socio-cultural interactive dynamics.

Most of the Brazilians in this work refer to their regions of origin as multicultural, claiming a variety of ethnic groups that compose them. Perhaps, their points of view lead them to believe that, in a small fraction of this multicultural background, there was a space where they identify themselves, and, in the case of this micro-region, this process is more difficult to identify, because there is a perception of a well-defined dominant culture to which they feel they do not relate. This also causes conflict and, for some, coexistence is established with veiled resistance which inhibits a greater sense of belonging. The perception and the representation of reality are relative, changing, and dependent upon which end the person is at.

Others feel hybrid because they lived elsewhere and they have been acquiring new habits, customs, changing some and preserving others, being more open to sharing.

These processes take time and should be understood at different times, at a different pace and degree of commitment. And so it is in living together, sharing ideas that people identify themselves with, and join in a society (culture), not necessarily in one form, but in one made of differences which coexist in a nation and in a world in constant reconstruction.

In relation to the language, it can be concluded that English was the bond that facilitated the integration of those who came to live in this micro-region. Also, the ability to speak English positively influenced the career of many interviewees allowing for social interaction.

In analysing the trajectory of the study of English, over the last 40 years, based on reports and surveys, it is evident that it has had an impact on the relationships and, English speaking foreigners who recently came into this micro-region, state that they are able to relate outside the workplace because of an increased number of people speaking English in various segments of this society.

It can be concluded that a new mindset has emerged towards the learning of English within this micro-region, whether to study, to interact with the world, or to increase job opportunities. Perhaps it is daring to affirm, but evidence leads to believe that this mentality was motivated initially by the coming of transnational companies and the demand for a language mediating economic, social and cultural relations.

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