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Culture, Language, and Knowledge About the Syncretism

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1. Introduction

In this paper I intend to review the phenomenon called syncretism in Brazil in its possible relation to the racial issue, presenting previous studies on the subject within the social sciences, particularly Anthropology, and later introducing the linguistic point of view in an interdisciplinary way.

In contrast to the thought of Andre Valente (1976), to whom the syncretism could be considered an exhausted topic, the observation of the frequent use of the word syncretism in the media shows instead that the issue is still in the spotlight today. The changes related to the kind of attention the issue has been receiving lately, which are imposed by its recontextualization and adaptation in these vehicles, as well as its own insertion in the media environment bring different nuances to the issue that need to be analyzed.

Due to the importance of this phenomenon, this paper will be dedicated to a close reflection on syncretism from two distinct, yet interrelated, theoretical perspectives represented by the fields of Anthropology and Linguistics.

To the introduction of the linguistic view, I review the syncretism in its relation to the Brazilian racial issue in order to demonstrate how it is represented in two Brazilian newspapers (*O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo*), and two Brazilian magazines that cover general issues (*Veja* and *Época*). Those vehicles were selected, mainly, due to the far-reaching circulation of each of them, and their consequent social insertion.

In this paper, the lexis is taken as an analysis category, but in a different perspective from what is traditionally worked in the field of the Lexical Studies - Lexicology, Lexicography, Terminology and Terminography. According to Biderman (2001), the lexis can be considered a way of registering the knowledge of the universe since there is a process of nominalization of reality which enables the man to label entities, appropriating the real. In other words, to the author, "the generation of the lexis was processed and is still processed through successive cognition acts of reality and categorization of the experience, crystallized in the linguistic signs: the words" (p. 13).

From the statement above, it is clear that the lexis carries in its meaning important aspects of the world view that individuals have. According to the author, the words that are generated

by the system of lexical-grammatical categories of a language are labels by which humans interact cognitively with their environment.

In this paper, I intend, differently, but considering what was mentioned above, show the lexis not only as an element of registering knowledge or label entities or an element that carries a meaning in itself, but also as an element that helps in the construction and representation of a particular "reality" which is a result of the dialogism between humans and the environment and between the humans and society. Then, in line with Eggins (1994), the lexical relations are taken here as gateways to social and cultural issues capable of assisting in the understanding of the relation among language, society and culture. Here, I look at the syncretism issues as a bias of the Brazilian race relations.

The theoretical and methodological basis is constructed in an interdisciplinary way by Social Sciences, especially the Anthropology since it is a field that traditionally studies the syncretism; the Critical Discourse Analysis and the Corpus Linguistics. The latter was used as a tool for data collection.

The corpus is constituted of texts that were published from 1998 to 2003 in the media vehicles mentioned above. The selected texts were the ones in which the word *sincretismo* (in English: syncretism)¹ had occurred at least once. This lexis was taken as a socioculturally relevant item in accordance to what was proposed by Raymond Williams (1976).

The base category is the lexical relations established with and from the word *sincretismo* which will be expanded to the category of interdiscursivity, as proposed in the Critical Discourse Analysis.

Our reflections are organized in two sections, as follows: 2. Syncretism in Brazil: from the universe of the Social Sciences ..., 3. ... to the universe of language in the media - discourse, society and culture in interaction; the latter was subdivided into: 3.1. Presentation of Data, 3.2. Lexical relations and semantic profile of the keyword *sincretismo*, and 3.3. Lexical relations, interdiscursivity and representation: understanding the syncretic tension in Brazil. Finally, the last part of this paper is dedicated to the conclusion and references.

2. Syncretism in Brazil: From the universe of Social Sciences...

Silva (1994) begins his reflections on syncretism saying that the syncretism is a result of the intimate contact between Portuguese and Africans, with their respective religions, cultures and languages. Therefore, we can consider syncretism an inter-religious, intercultural and inter-linguistic process². Pierson (1945) had already noticed the power relations that could be inferred from this phenomenon when he said that the syncretism is a process that aims to solve a cultural conflict situation characterized by the struggle for status. As Valente (1976, p. 11-12) clarifies, one of the hallmarks of this phenomenon is the intermixture of cultural

¹ As the corpus of the present research was in Portuguese, the keyword that triggered data collection was *sincretismo*, which means "syncretism" in English. Therefore, throughout this text whenever I use this word referring to the methodology and the research keyword, it will be treated as *sincretismo* and when I discuss the issue of syncretism itself, I will use the word in English.

² It is worth mentioning here the acknowledgement of the also great indigenous contribution (cf. Vainfas, 1995), albeit it is not the focus of the present study.

elements in an intimate interfusion; a true symbiosis in some cases among the components of the cultures that are put in contact. This fact can connect the syncretism to two phenomena, which are, (1) the accommodation: a starting point for a further external adjustment process. It is very often fast processed, being considered a conscious experience which contributes to individual's connection with the values that belong to his/her original culture; and (2) the assimilation, in which the change occurs in the individual's inner experience due to the interpenetration and fusion of traditions, feelings and attitudes among the individuals and the different groups that start to share their experience and their history in order to constitute the "same" cultural life. In this case, the process is gradual and is considered unconscious. As Valente (1976, p. 13) emphasizes, "the phenomenon of syncretism seems to be very clear in the situation of religious conflict imposed by the shock of fetishistic Black -African conglomerate with the Luso-Brazilian Catholicism". On a first instance, it can be argued that there was an apparent correspondence which was consciously established between the Christian saints and African pantheon deities. The effects of this conscious reflection were, gradually, automating. They became thoughtless and unconscious, since the Africans' religious field, and of their descendants in Brazil, was being developed in close relation to the Portuguese's one. For Valente (1976, p. 15), "although the African fetishism in Brazil has suffered the influence of Spiritualism and other native American religions, the dominant action which the Catholicism exerted on the Fetishism is incontestable." What was and may still be extremely discussed by theorists who study the Africans is whether there was a catechesis of Africans indeed, or if all that happened wasn't just a dissimulation; an apparent catholic catechesis.

From the etymological point of view, according to Cunha (1982, p. 725), *syncretism* is a word derived from the French *synchrétisme*. The latter derived from the scientific Latin *syncretismus* that was in its turn derived from the Greek *sygkretismós*. According to the author, this word designated the amalgamation of different doctrines or conceptions. In philosophy, it designated a group of artificial ideas or thesis from disparate origins.

This "disparate", in Brazilian terms, can be interpreted in relation to the methods used to analyze the contacts between African and European cultures: the comparative method which came to replace the historic method.

As the historic studies about the African people were limited, an ethnological research based in comparative methods gains strength with the support of the teacher Raimundo Nina Rodrigues' works. He was a student from Bahia who was considered a landmark on the studies of Africans and their descendants in Brazil. After his death in 1906, there was a stagnation moment in the field that lasted until 1926 when the anthropologist Arthur Ramos and, later, his disciples go back to his writings and proceed with his research in the field. Since then, the African studies have gained new directions in Brazil, and have being also developed by sociologists (cf. FREYRE, 1961).

Thus, the studies of cultural contacts that would later lead to the origin of Afro-Brazilians studies in the field of Human Sciences get strength and many of the gaps found in the works of Nina Rodrigues are fulfilled.

It should be emphasized that the studies of Rodrigues, regardless the value of all research on African culture and heritage, were impregnated by a view full of prejudice about Africans and their descendants. Such view is also present in the works of many other

authors. Like Rodrigues, many intellectuals and many institutions of that time were being influenced by the ideas of Evolutionism and Darwinism. Those ideas brought a sense of evolution that was based on a European and Western “ideal”. This notion served as a basis to the construction of the concept of race (Schwarcz, 2001).

In this sense, seeking the origin of this term when associated to the Brazilian race, Ferretti (1995, p. 41, 2001, p. 15) begins his analysis pointing out that the founder of the so called field of African-Brazilian studies was the doctor Nina Rodrigues, who discusses the syncretism without using the term, although this term was already known in that time. According to the author (2001, p. 15), Rodrigues uses "words / terms such as: fusion of beliefs; juxtaposition of externalities and ideas; association; adaptation; equivalence of deities; and, mainly and significantly, catechesis illusion."

According to Ferretti (2001, p. 14-15), the term syncretism was rejected by many researchers for having negative connotations and being considered inaccurate and ambiguous. Unlike Nina Rodrigues, who does not use it, his disciple Arthur Ramos uses the term syncretism in an attempt to change his master's evolutionist and racist perspective for a culturalist one. At first, Arthur Ramos considered the syncretism a harmonious result of cultural contacts, but later he has acknowledged that such contact does not always occur in a harmonious way, especially when it is associated to the colonization and the slavery.

Without dealing specifically with the problem of syncretism, Moura (1988, p. 18), in a different perspective from Nina Rodrigues', observes that the African studies are developed subordinated to methods that are not able to and do not intend to penetrate the essence of the problems in order to solve them. According to him, the essence of those problems is related to the tensions created around the contact between European and African cultures. Perhaps this happens due to the racist point of view pointed out by Ferretti. According to Moura, Arthur Ramos relies on both psychoanalysis and the American cultural-historical method to work with what he calls the “world of black Brazilian”. That is what explains his culturalist approach.

Moura's and Ferretti's arguments presented below suggest that Nina Rodrigues did not believe on his own concept of syncretism as a soothing element, what could explain the difference related to Arthur Ramos' original approach. He, at first, had a vision of syncretism as a harmonious contact of cultures (cf. Ramos, 1942), while Nina Rodrigues used terms that indicated the opposite, like his most used term: catechesis illusion, which also points to the European supremacy present in his speech (cf. Robinson, 1935). In other words, Nina Rodrigues saw the relation between cultures and the supposed "harmony" among them as an illusion. The juxtaposition of externalities also points to this thought, since it indicates a polarization between exterior and interior, and, therefore, the impossibility of a real fusion. It is only later, when Arthur Ramos connects the phenomenon to the colonialism and to the slavery, that he seems to converge to Nina Rodrigues' approach, giving strength to it, even acknowledging Rodrigues as the founding father of the field of studies that he called Afro-Brazilian.

Another highlighted name mentioned by Ferretti (1995, p. 53-58, 2001, p. 18-19) is Roger Bastide, who gave little emphasis to the concept of syncretism. Ferretti considers him as the most important author in the field entitled in Human Sciences as African-Brazilian studies. According to Bastide (1971a), the idea of syncretism remembered fusion, mixture or

identification. However it did not imply mixture or identifications, but similarities and equivalences.

Ferretti (1995, 2001) also notes that Marcus Aurelius Luz worked with the idea that the syncretism was concerned with the process of whitening (cf. Luz, 1983) and Pierre Verger worked with the idea that syncretism did not exist in reality, because the mentioned mixture did not really take place. To him, the cultural and religious sincerity contributed to keep different culture and religions (such as Catholicism and *Candomblé*) split up as a form of resistance (cf. Verger, 1963).

For Sanchis (1983), the syncretism takes place in a relation of inequality and in a relation of religious, cultural and political domination. According to Consorte (1999), it is connected to the process of insertion of Africans and their descendants in the Brazilian society, and to the construction or reconstruction of their identities. In Ferretti's opinion (2001, p. 24), the syncretism is possibly related to issues of resistance.

As it is summarized by Ferretti (1999: 113), the "syncretism is considered an evil word," since many researchers avoid using it due to its meaning negative, used as a synonym of a jumble mixture of different elements, or as an imposition of the evolutionism and the colonialism. Droogers (1989) clarifies that the term has double meaning: an objective, neutral and descriptive one which refers to mixture of religions and a subjective meaning since it involves the evaluation of that mixture.

Moura (1988) shows that the different works produced about the Africans and their descendants sought to verify, study and interpret the Africans and their descendants merely as a simple component of a culture that was different from the national ethos. This contributed to the dissemination of racism and to the production of extensive ethnographic research on the African religious world and on everything that was meant to be different from the western style, which was taken as normative. The author points out that studies about Africans and their descendants are a reflection of the very structure of Brazilian society. This implies the idea that Brazilian society is racist and perpetuates the difference.

Reflecting specifically on syncretism, Moura (1988, p. 34) criticizes the fact that anthropologists and sociologists have not properly discussed certain concepts concerning the relation between who has African heritage and who has European heritage in Brazil, such as the concepts of syncretism, assimilation, accommodation and acculturation. For the author, when you forget the position and structure of ethnic groups which have different culture patterns, the vision you have is an academic understanding of the problem and not of the process of social dynamics. The author says: "before we examine these cultural contacts, we need to situate the mode of production in which they take place. Otherwise, we will be incapable of analyzing the social content of this process" (Moura, 1988, p. 34).

To Moura, it is important to review these concepts since they are linked to a colonizing social science and being used by the colonized. To him, the origin of Anthropology leads to realize its original purpose as "arming the colonial system," because its practical activity sought to rationalize the colonialism due to its Eurocentric position. It is important to highlight the need to critically reevaluate the situation and "the ideological heritage that permeates and is manifested in a series of basic concepts, used by anthropologists in a significant level until today" (Moura, 1988, p. 35).

According to Moura (1988, p. 38), the concept of syncretism used by Brazilian anthropologists is "a prolonged and permanent religious contact among members of superior and inferior cultures." The author's criticism to the studies of anthropologists and especially to Valente (1976)'s point of view, previously mentioned, concerns the argument that a culture called superior can also be influenced by a so-called inferior culture.

The religious syncretism is strong because Christianity played an important role called by the author as "ideological apparatus of domination". However, the African religions became important elements of social and ideological resistance. That is why Moura highlights the fact that Waldemar Valente had not seen the opposite possibility, that is, "the growing influence of those religions called fetishists at the heart of the 'delicacies' of Christianity" (p. 35).

According to Moura (1988), these problems are still connected to the process of acculturation- a term used to express a process of relation and incorporation of cultural items from one culture to another - and matches the idea of racial democracy. Quoting the author:

in the process of acculturation the mechanisms of economic, social, political and cultural domination persist determining who is superior or inferior. (...) [So] by completing the process of acculturation we will culminate directly in the concept of racial democracy, so dear to many sociologists and politicians in Brazil (Moura, 1988, p. 45 and 48).

Therefore, the author stresses that the reality shows the opposite of this democracy, since it has a dependent capitalist way of production. This way, by fractioning the society into classes, it generates conflicts due to inequalities coming from the struggle of classes where the most affected class was the African descendants that came to occupy the lowest position in society.

What can be gathered from this is that there seems to be a racist discourse permeating the discourses about syncretism. This racist discourse remains as a vestige of slavery. That is, slavery and racism are interrelated from the racial ideologies perspective (cf. Ianni, 1988) along with issues related to prejudice that this interrelation can generate.

Francisco (1992) analyzes two issues, the whitening and the racial democracy, and says that racism as a doctrine generates a racial and racist politics in the form of racial discrimination and / or racial segregation, what implies the diffusion and the engendering of a coherent ideology both with politics as well as with the racial and racist doctrine that it illuminates. This way it leads to prejudice, such as a prefabricated judgment which is then broadcasted.

Peter Fry (1984) states that the concepts of pure, mixture and syncretism are essentially social constructions and tend to appear on occasions of struggles for power and hegemony. Fairclough (1992), looking for productive interfaces between language studies and the society, argues that the focus of current studies must be on the social change and on the discursive practices that strive for hegemony, since it is within the discursive practices that the concepts are both constructed and also challenged. Being challenged, they can lead to social changes.

This summary, which shows some constructions of the notion of syncretism, justifies the need to study this social, cultural and religious phenomenon as a discursive aspect of

cultural hybridism in Brazil. This is possible by taking the keyword syncretism and associating it with the racial issues through a discursive linguistic approach, taking into consideration the view of racism as a support of processes of exclusion and differentiation in the country.

The studies related to culture and / African-Brazilian religion are developed in most cases, within the Sociology, Anthropology, History or Psychology (cf. Cupertino, 1976; Silva, 1994; Prandi, 2000) with no interaction with the linguistic studies. This is indeed due to the fact that traditionally it is taken for granted that the fields of studies have boundaries and each discipline, specially, Linguistics, tend to work within its boundaries. And, as noted by Ferretti (2001, p. 26), "syncretism, culture, identity, ethnicity and other complex social categories demand to be thought and rethought, with the collaboration of different sciences and chains of thought."

The point of view from the evolutionism and from comparative methods used in studies about the Africans and their descendants, their culture and religion, as noted, helped to perpetuate a racist discourse that, even later when was opposed, remained. Today, this discourse seems to be challenged, since there seems to be a tension presented by the media which is contributing to value the African descent.

Analyzing the African-Brazilian religions, Prandi (1999, p. 93) explains that their history can be divided into three stages, named (1) the Syncretism with the Catholicism, as observed in the traditional religious modalities such as the *Candomblé*, the *Xangô*, the *Tambor de Mina* and the *Batuque*, (2) the whitening that originated the *Umbanda* between 1920 and 1930, and (3) The Africanization that aimed to transform the *Candomblé* in a universal religion, denying the syncretism (from the 1960s).

Consorte (1999) analyses this context, indicator of change, highlighting results coming from the Second World Conference of Culture and *Orixá* Tradition, held in Salvador, from 17 to 23 July 1983. At this conference, different communities (scientific, religious, groups of black consciousness, among others) analyzed the situation of the African descendants, especially the religious situation. Some of the exponents of the *Candomblé Baiano* decided to make a rupture with syncretism. This discussion gained space in the media and soon gained large dimension.

Ferretti (1999, p. 115) corroborates this fact. According to him, nowadays, many leaders and militants, specially the most intellectualized ones, tend to follow that strategy of condemnation of syncretism in the field of Afro-Brazilian religions. To him, the organization of the Second World Conference of Culture and *Orixá* Tradition, held in 1983 served to diffuse this new perspective. According to him, there is a movement of re-Africanization spread in the south and in expansion throughout Brazil. This movement not only criticizes but also fights against the syncretism, seeking an African purity, in the form of a return to primitive Africanism.

Prandi (1999, p. 106) warns that to africanize does not mean being African, to wish to be Africans or even to live like Africans, since the majority of the *Candomblés* disciples are constituted by adepts from other origins. To the author, to africanize means intellectualization, access to a sacred literature containing the reorganization of the cult, in

accordance to models brought from Africa, which implied the appearance of a priest able to overcome an identity as poor, ignorant and discriminated Baiano.

According to Consorte (1999, p. 73), the cult to the *Orixás* shows up as a religion of African origin that existed prior to slavery itself, since it was constituted in Africa and was brought from their homeland by the own Africans. To the author, the rejection of syncretism seemed easy, because it suggested a matter of awareness of the imposition process that came from the slavery. In addition, this denial was also linked to the process of insertion of the African descendants in Brazil, and to the reconstruction of their identity, which would be considered much more complex (p. 79).

Silva (1999, p. 154) says:

If in earlier periods a re-africanization lived next to syncretism, the same does not hold in more recent times, when some of the main leaders of *Candomblé* engage in a concentrated movement to move away from the Catholic and Amerindian influences, understanding that the African tradition is an African tradition in Brazil, as if the influences of the Catholic and other mixtures in *Candomblé* were deleted, and a new Africa arose here in its pure state, as it would have been brought by the slaves in the past.

However, it is clear that the ideologies that supported the syncretism - the whitening, the perfect mixture of cultures and religions in Brazil and the racial democracy - still seem to remain in the media.

According to Silva (1999, p. 155), the discourse of de-syncretization proposes to change a tradition supported by selective reading of certain scientific explanations of the same tradition. That means that there has been an incorporation of explanations about syncretism as domination and that it is possible to revoke it.

So, despite all the discussion, Consorte (1999) also notes that little has changed because of the strong tradition that the syncretism has. From the discursive perspective, I think this shows that the different codes engendered in the process of syncretization cannot simply be deleted, but the speech can be a space to promote change.

These arguments only triggered the transformations. Different discourses are still struggling for legitimacy and hegemony. Therefore it is important to make room for the study of these discourses that seek to modify a state of affairs already established, challenging the dominant and hegemonic discourse in an attempt to change the social order, presenting again some issues related to the Brazilian racial issue in a different way.

In these terms, it is fair to say that there is an undeniable dialogue among text, society and culture, because the texts - as places for discourse materialization - are social and cultural products that are historical and culturally situated, and used as vehicles of thought and re-contextualization of the discursive and social practices. In a moment of potential transformation, the texts are configured, therefore, as vehicles for the materialization of many engendered discourses within the institutions from which they derive, in a state of tension and struggle that tries to make their voices legitimate and hegemonic, however, always in an unstable way.

In the case of syncretism, it seems that both the media and the scientific institutions are the arenas that carry the voice of social and religious institutions which are at the heart of the

discussion. From the engendering of the first in the process of serving their communities, and the confrontation established by the latter, the space and the ideal moment for a transformation process were created. This can enable a change in the existing social order from the questioning of syncretism which, in its turn, leads to a questioning of the racial and social inequality.

Silva (2000), analyzing the origin of racial inequalities in Brazil, says that it was born in the very social origin, in the educational and occupational attainment, and especially in the people's incomes. For him, the groups of people who identify themselves as black or mulattoes would already be subject to a process of subjection and inferiority. This brings up the processes of social exclusion that value the white people and their culture instead of the black people and their respective culture.

According to the author, the individuals' socioeconomic life cycle would be divided into social mobility and income acquisition, reflecting the profile of a more modest occupational achievement for those groups. Thus, it reinforces the subjugation of the black individuals and mulattoes to a living condition that is extremely inferior comparing to the ones faced by the white people in the Brazilian society.

The social inequality is therefore the result of the process of the white domination over black, connecting to the forms of differentiation and exclusion of which racism is part of. Francisco (1992) shows that the racism is a component of the class domination process, both in a coercive level as in an intellectual and moral level of society. Therefore, according to the author, it is perceived as by the black, as by the mestizo and white in the economic and social levels. The author adds that this perception is not clear in political and ideological terms. It is worth to highlight that, as Francisco explains, there is no evidence to say that the black discrimination is practiced consciously by any segment. However, it is indeed an expression of the political and ideological consciousness of the dominant and hegemonic class.

That is, it is possible to observe that there is a close relation among syncretism, racial and social inequality, and domination. It must be highlighted as well that, although Smith (2000) and Francisco (1992) have adopted an economic basis for their reflection, it is undeniable that the exclusion is also projected in the cultural and religious matters. Therefore it is a broad issue, as this study seeks to demonstrate.

The syncretism as a concept linked to the whitening ideology presents itself also as an extension of the forms of differentiation, since it masks the African culture. Then the syncretism can be seen as a result of a racist thought, because it is born in the subordination of the African descendant who needs to whiten his skin to be accepted.

When the African descendant is aware of his value, he begins to see himself, his religion and culture as just important as any other. He challenges everything that keeps him in a subordinate position, both ideologies and other forms of social asymmetry that generate exclusion and inequality.

Moura's (1988) orientation is that the black people, African descendants, would be a reflection of their own social structure that puts them in an underprivileged position. This is reflected in the difficulty with which they ascend socially. As Figueiredo (2002, p. 99) clarifies, "the integration of the black people in the Brazilian society takes place through

assimilation of the codes and values of the dominant culture". The real problem, as already pointed by Bastide (1971b, p. 525), is that "they [the cultures] do not necessarily go together, neither they are unfolded in the same temporality, but they remain always united to each other in a certain way."

In this context, Fernandes (1972, p. 16) shows that getting into what he calls "white world" requires a "process of becoming Brazilian that is, inescapably, a systematic process of whitening." For the author, in order to have a social ascension, the Africans and their descendants must deny themselves. At this point the tension among the discourses about syncretism is justified, since the syncretism has been precisely the notion that engenders the whitening process and the anti-syncretism the one which challenges it, making it to lose ground by a re-valuation of the African descendants.

To Figueiredo (2002, p. 104):

The black culture is often identified by religion, cuisine, music and dance, while the white culture is associated with more general aspects such as formal education, information, politics, technology, that is, with almost all aspects of social life. In this sense, it seems impossible not to experience the daily aspects of "white culture" or better, whitening is apparently inevitable.

In the specific case of this research, I will try to explain how the media, particularly the newspapers and magazines that cover general issues have represented this process of transformation. To do that, I borrow the concept of interdiscursivity from Critical Discourse Analysis. In this field of study, the term intertextuality refers to the presence of other texts in a local articulation in the text. Interdiscursivity, in its turn, refers to a more complex process in which there is a global interweaving of discursive genres and discourses that generates a re-articulation that can affect the discourse itself and the genres, changing them.

This is the space to which Applied Linguistics can contribute by showing how the tension among the discourses towards the Brazilian syncretism is developed and its possible relation to the racial issues.

Therefore, I advocate for an interdisciplinary scientific perspective that makes room for the research I present here, since as a new interdisciplinary space, the Applied Linguistics can bring a contribution to the studies on the discursive aspects of the Brazilian cultural hybridity. Bringing new light to this discussion, it may help to raise questions and seek linguistic evidences, textual and discursive, that can bring out some new positioning on the many variables involved with the notion of syncretism. This is done through the analysis of the lexical co-occurrences of the word syncretism, and their intra-textual and discursive correlation in media texts. The media discourse is taken here due to its important role in the construction and reproduction of thoughts in society.

3. ... to the universe of language in the media – Discourse, society and culture in interaction

In this section I present a research first developed in Carmo (2005), with subsequent developments in Carmo & Magalhães (2010) and Carmo (2011a, 2011b). This approach takes as a theoretical reference the view proposed by Fairclough (1992, 1995) who proposes a three dimensional perspective for language studies: language as text; discursive practice – since it

involves the process of production, distribution and consumption of the text; and social practice. I also take some other theorists affiliated to the Critical Discourse Analysis, who make use of Corpus Linguistics in order to establish a qualitative-quantitative framework for language analysis (cf. Hardt-Mautner, 1995; Krishnamurthy, 1998; Magalhães, 2004). The first step taken to develop the research was to collect the corpus in the site of the researched media vehicles and preparation for the screening in the program WordSmith Tools. The next steps were the ones that follow:

1. production of a frequency table of the word *sincretismo*, whose words of the same root were not included, for statistical verification of the word *sincretismo* in order to view its use as a node, that is, the keyword that has been used to trigger the search in the corpus and to orient the analysis;
2. production of a frequency table of the word *sincretismo* in which words of the same root were included (lemmatization function in the WordSmith Tools) due to their cohesive potential and the relation established as maintenance element of a field;
3. production of the list of concordances with the keyword *sincretismo* for analysis of the typical co-text of its occurrence and a further analysis of the semantic prosody originated in these lines;
4. production of the list of lexical groups (clusters) created from and with the word *sincretismo*, in order to examine possible patterns with the word *sincretismo* in the corpus;
5. production of tables of collocation and collocation patterns to facilitate the observation of usage patterns created with the word *sincretismo*, and to help in the analysis of evoked semantic prosodies in order to draw the semantic profile to the lexical item in question;
6. verification of the main lexical relations and collocations built with and/or from the word *sincretismo*, using the tables of collocation and collocation patterns;
7. production of a table with the most frequent words in the corpus for verification of their relation in the texts.

The instruments used within the package WordSmith Tools were: (a) WordList: to list the words, (b) Concordances: to list the lines of concordances, obtaining the word search and its co-text (c) clusters: to list the lexical groups, (d) collocate: to list the collocations, that is, the co-occurring words, and (e) Patterns: to obtain the table of collocation patterns (cf. Berber-Sardinha, 2004). After that, other actions were undertaken like:

8. search for the most frequent words;
9. search for the main lexical relations formed with the word *sincretismo*;
10. verification of the language fields associated with *sincretismo*, using the lines of concordances;
11. analysis of the syncretism as a discursive aspect of the Brazilian racial issue, based on the lexical relations and the related fields, in the light of Critical Discourse Analysis;
12. contrast among the analysis carried out on the newspapers and magazines of general issues.

3.1 Presenting the data

As general data, we had a corpus of 163 texts with 108,088 tokens (items), divided into 16,152 types (forms). In the case of *O Globo*, there were 75,589 tokens, in 13 185 types and 107 texts. The sub-corpus of *Folha de S. Paulo* had 20,942 tokens, 5016 types, in 30 texts. In the

magazines, we had *Veja* with 3,728 tokens, distributed in 1247 types, in 14 texts, and *Época* with 8,137 tokens, 2,853 types and 12 texts.

In the corpus as a whole, the word *sincretismo* occurred 211 times, representing 0.19% of the corpus. With lemmatization (operation that allows to aggregate other items to the word being analyzed such as words variations and inflections), this rate increased to 223 occurrences, corresponding to 0.20%. Of those 211 occurrences of the word *sincretismo*, 130 occurred in *O Globo* (0.17%), 39 in *Folha de S. Paulo* (0.19%), 16 in *Veja* magazine (0.32%) and 26 in *Época* magazine (0.38%). With the function lemmatization, this figure rises to 134 in *O Globo* (0.17%), 42 in *Folha de S. Paulo* (0.20%), 31 in *Época* magazine (0.40%), remaining unchanged only in *Veja* magazine.

Together, the newspapers have 176 occurrences of the word *sincretismo*, which represents 0.17% of the sub-corpus formed by the two newspapers together. Making use of lemmatization, this number increases to 183 occurrences, corresponding to 0.18% of the sub-corpus. The magazines together used the word *sincretismo* 42 times (0.35%), a number that increases to 47 with the lemmatization, equivalent to 0.40% of the sub-corpus. The difference in the number of occurrences of the keyword in the two types of media is due, mainly, to the mass media communication periodicity, since the newspapers are daily and the magazines weekly distributed.

In general, the collocation does not demonstrate the existence of many possible lexical relations with varied items. In *O Globo*, it is formed just with the following items: *sincretismo*, *religioso*, *afro-brasileiro*, *cultura* and *mistura* (syncretism, religious, African-Brazilian, culture and mixture). This result is given in a range of five columns to the right and five columns to the left of the reference word - the keyword *sincretismo* (measure of the program WordSmith Tools). Likewise, in *Folha de S. Paulo*, the relations are formed, with the same range, but only with *sincretismo* and *religioso* (religious).

These relations do not indicate any connotation neither neutral, nor positive or negative, contributing to a production of a neutral semantic profile for the word syncretism. They indicate that, in the newspapers surveyed, the work syncretism is in first place related to the religious field, which can be corroborated by the representation of the *religioso* (religious) collocate in the production of lexical groupings, collocation and collocation patterns.

As these lexical relations and the collocation, by itself, did not indicate the semantic prosody, we analyzed each occurrence manually and verified that the semantic prosody - association between lexical items and connotation (negative, positive or neutral) of semantic fields - of the word *sincretismo* is predominantly positive, specially by the phenomenon/process of being placed as characterization of Brazil as a country that brings within it many ethnicities, religions and cultures (e.g. *A estátua é belíssima e sua imagem me fez lembrar do sincretismo religioso da cultura brasileira.* - The statue is beautiful and its image reminded me of the religious syncretism in Brazilian culture. - *O Globo*).

Although there are different concepts attributed to syncretism and divergences around those concepts in the fields of social sciences, particularly the Anthropology, the current usage of the term in the news media seems to be most frequent in co-text with the word *mistura* (mixture) and, in most cases, with positive connotations that associate it with the hybrid constitution of the country in cultural, religious, human, ethnic and artistic terms (including in the last case, the music and the carnival).

As for the times in which the word *sincretismo* occurs with negative semantic prosody, it is associated with words that can be interpreted negatively (e.g. *escravidão, rebeldia, absorção, massacre, dor, extermínio, combate, choque, fascism* - slavery, rebellion, absorption, massacre, pain, extermination, fighting, shock, fascism, among others) or clearly denied in its own structure (e.g. *O sincretismo é resquício da escravidão...* or *...teve a coragem de dizer não ao sincretismo* - Syncretism is vestige of the slavery ... or ... dared to say no to syncretism - *O Globo*).

Similarly to what happened in the analysis of the newspapers, the co-textual analysis, and therefore the analysis of the semantic prosody of the word syncretism was only possible through the examination of the concordances. In *Veja* magazine, the semantic prosody of the word *sincretismo* is positive in all occurrences. The collocation and the collocation patterns showed in all occurrences only the word *religioso* (religious) listed as collocations to the word *sincretismo*.

In *Época* magazine, the examination of the collocations and collocation patterns showed only 6 occurrences of the word *religioso* (religious) as collocate to *sincretismo*, all of them distributed on the range of five columns to the right. The difference here is that there was the possibility of a negative semantic prosody.

In other words, in *Época* magazine, most of the time, syncretism has negative connotations due to its use with the prefix *anti* (*anti-sincretismo* - anti-syncretism), or because it was used with words like *combato, crítica, contra, revogação, desafia, opõe-se, abaixo, liberdade, colônia* (fight, criticism, against, repeal, challenge, oppose, below, freedom and colony). From the 26 occurrences, only 8 were positive and the other 18 brought negative semantic prosody.

There was not enough frequency of different collocates in the sub-corpus of each magazine to enable the production of grouping tables through the WordSmith Tools. Therefore, this grouping was done by hand, using as reference the most productive collocate, *religioso* (religious). It was also possible to relate the keyword to the item *cultural* (cultural) in the two magazines, and to the *musical* (musical) and *brasileiro* (Brazilian) only in *Época* magazine.

Thus, the biggest contrast between the magazines is due to the fact that *Veja* magazine brings positive semantic prosody, associating the syncretism to artistic events, especially concerts in which there is a naturalization of the ideal construction of syncretism as a perfect mixture. *Época* magazine, on the other hand, brings a predominantly negative semantic prosody for the term.

3.2 Lexical relations and semantic profile of the keyword syncretism

Assuming that the collocates of a particular node can draw a semantic profile for it, we could notice that, opposite to what is argued in anthropological and social sciences (that there is a negativity or conceptual fluctuation regarding the concept of syncretism), in the surveyed newspapers and general issue magazines, the word *syncretism* has a much higher frequency of positive semantic profile than a negative one. Only in *Época* magazine, the semantic prosody of the word *sincretismo* is paradoxically negative in most cases. The lexical relations are not produced with many varied items, as seen in the previous section. The number of items may vary, but these items remain, evoking even the same fields.

Another important information was that it was only through the analysis focused on the concordance lines, with expansion to paragraphs and sometimes to the text (length of

horizon according to the WordSmith Tools), that it was possible to view the associations that helped construct different connotations for the word *syncretism*.

The collocations of the word *syncretism* show, in general, a more positive connotation, both in the newspaper *O Globo* as in *Folha de S. Paulo*, since it establishes relations with fields that show *syncretism* as a phenomenon or process that values Brazil and its people.

The magazines, on the other hand, show a tension between positivity and negativity. In *Veja*, the connotation is positive, and in *Época*, it is negative. This negative connotation is not traced by the collocation patterns. It is only verified beyond this level, reaching the level of paragraphs and/or texts.

Due to a political issue, there is a clear attributed negativity in the item *anti-sincretismo* (anti-syncretism). By assigning negativity to *syncretism*, a contrary view is produced that is signaled by the negation imposed by the use of the prefix *anti*, which marks not only the lexical item, but a new way of perceiving the phenomenon. This can be seen in the paragraph below:

1. "Da nossa parte, o anti-sincretismo é também uma questão política", confirma Mestre Didi, sumo sacerdote do culto aos ancestrais no Candomblé. / Mãe Stella, mãe-de-santo do terreiro Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá, foi uma das primeiras a dar seu apoio ao anti-sincretismo. Ela afirma que o uso de imagens católicas no terreiro é profanação. "Sincretismo é resquício da escravatura", diz. "Não precisamos disso." - "From our point of view, the anti-syncretism is also a political issue," confirms Master Didi, High Priest of cult to ancestors in Candomblé. Mother Stella, mother-of-saint of the Ilê Axé Opo Afonjá, was one of the first to give her support to anti-syncretism. She says that the use of Catholic images in the yard is profanation. "Syncretism is vestige of slavery," she says. "We do not need this." (*Época* magazine).

In the example above, it can be seen the two models that are indicated in the discourses which are in tension. The first, which can be presupposed by the negation, intends to understand the *syncretism* as a phenomenon / process able to delete conflicts, the result of the naturalization of the ideology of whitening and also associated with the ideology (and myth) of racial democracy. The second is presented as a reaction to it. Both of them are heard from the voice of two important members of *Candomblé Baiano*. It is exactly the anti-syncretism, as a reaction to *syncretism*, that imprints a negative semantic prosody to the studied item.

This negative semantic prosody to *syncretism* and the positive prosody to the anti-syncretism come from the manifestation of African descendants that belonged to these religions and cultures, and because of that, were aware of its existence within those practices. The effect it produces, in the case of the negativity of the notion of *syncretism*, grows stronger, gaining more emphasis from the voices that are recognized by other supporters and African descendants. They become aware of this reaction and adhere to this discourse.

In structural terms, when analyzing the word *syncretism*, it can be verified that it always occurs as the nucleus of a nominal group (which has a noun as the nucleus: *o sincretismo religioso* - the religious *syncretism*). Sometimes it helps to form a prepositional phrase (group started by preposition as in: *do sincretismo religioso* - of the religious *syncretism*). Thus, the semantically constituted position is immediately to the right of the node and fulfilled,

almost always by a qualifier (e.g. *sincretismo* → *cultural; religioso; afro-brasileiro; sensorial; estético, instigante and explosivo; musical; eleitoral; plástico; inaceitável; artístico* - *syncretism* → *cultural, religious, African-Brazilian, sensory, aesthetic, exciting and explosive, musical, electoral, plastic, unacceptable and artistic*) and sometimes by adjectival phrases (e.g. *sincretismo* → *das religiões africanas; do Campo Grande; do culto africano; à americana; desta festa milenar* - *syncretism* → *of African religions, of Campo Grande, of African cult, to America and this ancient festival*). Few times it was constituted by relative clauses (e.g. *sincretismo* → *em que tudo se equivale; que remonta à época da escravidão* - *syncretism* → *in which everything is equal, that dates back to the period of slavery*). The position of a qualifier to the left of the word in analysis is uncommon. It has occurred only once with the word *aparente* (apparent) (*ao abrigo de um aparente sincretismo* - *sheltered by an apparent syncretism* - *Folha de S. Paulo*) and twice with the word *curioso* (curious) (e.g. *o curioso sincretismo entre a Bahia e a Índia; O "curioso sincretismo" a que se refere Gil* - *the curious syncretism between Bahia and India; the "curious syncretism" referred by Gil* - *O Globo*).

From all the qualifiers which are in the corpus, only *inaceitável* (unacceptable) (e.g. *Com base nos fatos acima, inclusive no sincretismo inaceitável...* - *Based on the above facts, including the unacceptable syncretism ...* - *O Globo*) produces a negative prosody. All the others help produce a neutral or positive semantic profile, for example, in: *Omolu, Orixá identificado com São Lázaro no sincretismo afro-brasileiro; ...a cantora que melhor traduziu o sincretismo musical brasileiro; Carlos Drummond de Andrade defendia o sincretismo cultural* - *Omolu, Orixá identified with St. Lazarus in the African-Brazilian syncretism; ... the best singer who translated the Brazilian musical syncretism and Carlos Drummond de Andrade, who defended the cultural syncretism* (*O Globo*).

The word *sincretismo* shows its connotations when it is inserted in certain contexts. In such cases, it is possible to verify the cultural models that support them. At the same time, those connotations help to revive its history under certain perspectives, positive or negative. At these moments, it is possible to access the universe of discourses and ideologies which underlies its use and coinage to explain the Brazilian cultural hybridity and social and racial relations in the country.

In a comparative dimension of analysis, we can see that of the 142 positive occurrences, 93 are from *O Globo*, 25 from *Folha de S. Paulo*, 16 from *Veja* magazine and 8 from *Época* magazine. Of the 60 negative prosodies, 30 are from the newspaper *O Globo*, 12 from *Folha de S. Paulo* and 18 from *Época* magazine. In the case of the neutral prosody, 7 were recorded in the newspaper *O Globo* and 2 in *Folha de S. Paulo*.

From these data, it seems that syncretism has, mostly, a positive connotation in the studied media vehicles. The hypothesis of semantic neutrality is very reduced, since only the newspapers pointed out to this possibility, although but with little representation. *Veja* magazine was the only vehicle to present, in 100% of the cases, a positive prosody. Similarly, *O Globo* also presents the syncretism in this way because it has a very expressive number of positive connotations compared to the number of negative and neutral prosodies. It is interesting to note that the only vehicle to present the syncretism mostly in a negative way was *Época* magazine, showing a different perspective from the other vehicles.

When the semantic prosody is positive, the fields/issues associated are: knowledge, religion (Catholic, *Umbanda* and *Candomblé*), identity, belief, history, music / dance (*samba, Jongo*,

jazz, Congo), origin, mixture, art, literature, philosophy, singing, smells, tastes, faith, customs, tradition, honor, Bahia, esotericism, original ideas, fortune telling, crystals, meditation, angels, culture, carnival, football, prestige, revelry, pilgrimage, celebration, freedom, blackness / survival of black culture, events, architecture, reconstruction, heritage, symbols, humanism, mixing, dialogue, character and linking. The following quotation may illustrate this analysis:

2. *Ninguém representa tão bem as religiões afro-brasileiras quanto o professor Agenor. E ninguém, como ele, é tão representativo do sincretismo, do ecumenismo e da tolerância religiosa que caracterizam essas crenças. Filho de Oxalá, ele se considera católico por ter sido batizado, acredita na reencarnação, como os kardecistas, e admira as religiões orientais.* - No one represents so well the African-Brazilian religions as the teacher Agenor. And no one, like him, is so representative of syncretism, of the ecumenism and of the religious tolerance that characterizes these beliefs. Son of Oxala, he considers himself Catholic for being baptized. He believes in reincarnation like the Kardecists and he admires the oriental religions (Folha de S. Paulo).

The example demonstrates the notion of syncretism as beneficial. And this positive point of view seems to be anchored again in the whitening ideology and in the ideology of the perfect mixture from which it originates. This is so, because the word syncretism in such occurrences is associated with items such as *tolerância* (tolerance) and with the idea of "association". Thus, when the conflicts are deleted, there is a union that, according to the statements mentioned in this paper, does not really exist, consisting only of a masking of conflicts.

The associations that produce the negative semantic prosody are made with the following items: problema, catequese, escravidão, rebeldia, absorção, massacre, competição/luta, adversário, liberdade de crença, associação, colonialismo, desafio, revogação, fidelidade, crítica, enfraquecimento religioso do catolicismo e do Candomblé, dor, modificação, miscigenação, profanação, animismo, macumba, separação, polêmica, oposição, rejeição, purismo, reação, racismo, fascismo, substituição, manifesto, aceitabilidade, necessidade de se esconder, crendice, amalgamamento, mistura "comportada", aparências, xifopagia, interpenetração, acusação, extermínio, imposição, tropeço, velório and choque (problem, catechesis, slavery, rebellion, absorption, massacre, competition/fight, opponent, freedom of belief, association, colonialism, challenge, revocation, fidelity, criticism, religious weakening of Catholicism and of Candomblé, pain, modification, mixing, profanity, animism, voodoo, separation, controversy, opposition, rejection, purism, reaction, racism, fascism, replacement, manifesto, acceptability, need for hiding, superstition, amalgamation, "behaved" mixture, appearances, conjoined, interpenetration, accusation, extermination, imposition, stumbling, funeral and shock. All of this added to words such as combate (combat), to clear negative connotations (result of a negative structure or the use of the term anti-sincretismo - anti-syncretism), and to the use of words such as the preposition contra (against):

3. *Desde o primeiro momento no cargo ele [Dom Lucas Moreira Neves] combateu o sincretismo religioso.* - From the very first moment in his position [Dom Lucas Moreira Neves] fought against the religious syncretism (*O Globo*).
4. *Não querem mais saber de sincretismo com os católicos.* - They do not want to deal with syncretism with the Catholics anymore (*Época* magazine).

5. *Ela [Mãe Stella] é contra o sincretismo religioso.* - She [Mother Stella] is against the religious syncretism (*Época* magazine).

The analysis of the semantic prosody is essential both to draw the semantic profile of the word syncretism and to analyze the fields to which the word is associated. This is so because when indicating evaluative processes that show connotations to the word syncretism, being them positive, negative or neutral, discourses are also revealed. These discourses are in a process of tension and conflict and many times are masked by the positive or neutral connotation.

3.3 Lexical relations, interdiscursivity and representation: Understanding the syncretic tension in Brazil

As we have seen, the syncretism dates back to the period of the constitution of Brazil as a colony. It presents itself as a result of different cultural models that were put in contact. Moreover, it is shown as a discourse that attempts to explain and / or to pacify the conflicting nature that is inherent to Brazilian society. This discourse is rooted in the ideologies of whitening; of the perfect mixture of different cultural traces and religious; and the ideology of the racial democracy.

The study of lexical relations that was developed here could also show that the European cultural model is still present in the discourse about syncretism. However, there is an opposing evaluative discourse model that stems from the black movements, especially from the religious authorities of *Candomblé*, which seeks to make a change.

This possible change comes in the early 80s of last century, when the discourse about syncretism is challenged by the anti-syncretistic discourse and by the discourse of re-africanization, preached mainly by important members of *Candomblé*, within the order of religious discourse. This is one of the possible reasons why the religion is the field which is more evoked when the syncretism is mentioned.

Nevertheless, what the present analysis indicates is still a reproduction of the notion of syncretism as a perfect idealized mixture of races, religions and cultures.

This is due to the collocations and to the lexical associations that are formed with and from the word *sincretismo*. In the production of texts and discourses that vehicle the notion of syncretism, the collocations and lexical associations constructed with the word *sincretismo* show an oscillation between notions that convey ideas of being in favor or against it. This happens not only in the media and in the religious field, but also in the academy that has been acknowledged as another discussion arena.

Therefore, the keyword *sincretismo* can be considered relevant for raising the discourses that are dialogically articulated in the representation of this social phenomenon, in order to understand some aspects of the Brazilian racial issue.

In the corpus, we could find a sum of 97 occurrences of the words *branco*, *brancos*, *branca* e *brancas* ("white" considering its plural and gender in Portuguese). A higher sum of occurrence was found for *negro* and its variations, derivations and inflexions, like *negões*, *negra*, *negras*, *negreiro*, *negreiros*, *negrinho*, *negritude*, *negro*, *negros*, *neguinho*. The amount of occurrences clearly show how deep the phenomenon of syncretism is related to the Afro-descendents, since the frequency of the words *branco* and *negro* (white and black) shows how the word *negro* is more marked in the texts.

The discourses about the syncretism refer, in this sense, to the discourse of the dominant and the dominated bringing along their cultural models in a relationship of confrontation, going back to the slavery and colonialism issues. It was found 97 occurrences of the word *escravo* (slave), including its inflections (related to gender and plural forms) or derivations, such as slavery. There were 57 occurrences of the word *colônia* (colony), including its inflection or derivations like *colonial*, *colonialism*, *colonialist*, *colonialistas*, *colônias*, *colonização*, *colono*, *colonos* - colonial, colonialism, colonialist, colonialists, colonies, colonization, settler and settlers. Therefore, these issues create a negative semantic prosody, as in the excerpts below:

6. *O sincretismo é um resquício da escravidão.* - The syncretism is a vestige of the slavery. (*O Globo*).
7. *Na apresentação Carlos Diegues, cineasta filho do etnólogo alagoano Manuel Diegues Júnior, se refere ao ponto de partida de investigação do autor: o negro perdura como negro no tempo brasileiro, não obstante a miscigenação no sangue e o sincretismo na alma.* - In the presentation, Carlos Diegues, filmmaker, son of Manuel Diegues Junior, ethnologist from Alagoas, refers to the starting point of the author's research: the black remains as black in the Brazilian time, which has not avoided the miscegenation in the blood and the syncretism in the soul. (*Época* magazine).
8. *A isso, acrescente-se, conforme sabemos da sociologia do açúcar, que na cultura popular os rios de Portugais encontram-se nas águas do Capibaribe. Ou seja: o negro no Brasil é invenção do açúcar explorado pelo colonizador português latifundiário.* - To this, add, as we know from the sugar sociology, that in the popular culture the rivers from Portugal meet in the waters of Capibaribe. That is: black in Brazil is invention of the sugar which was explored by the Portuguese colonist landowner. (*Folha de S. Paulo*).

In these terms, it should be noted that the analysis undertaken so far suggests the existence of a racist discourse permeating the syncretism discourses. Such discourse works in the maintenance of the differences that are reflected in the social, economic, religious and identity environments. Perhaps, that is why, there were 53 references to racial issues distributed among the exact occurrence of the word *raça* (race) and the following derivatives or inflections: *raças*, *raciais*, *racial*, *racialmente*, *racismo*, *racistas* - races, racial, racially, racism and racists. As for *etnia* (ethnicity), its derivatives and inflections, there is a larger number of varieties, but similar number of occurrences (46): *etnias*, *étnica*, *étnicas*, *étnico*, *étnicos*, *etnocêntricos*, *etnografia*, *etnográfica*, *etnográfico*, *etnógrafo*, *etnológicos*, *etnólogo*, *etnólogos*, *etnomusicologia* - ethnicity, ethnic (considering its plural and gender forms), ethnocentric, ethnography, ethnographic, ethnology, ethnologist ethnologists and ethnomusicology. This small difference may point to the struggle between the racist discourse and the academic one. The former sustains the processes of differentiation between superiors/inferiors, dominants/ dominated in the form of exclusion based in biological categories. The latter, on the other hand, states the difference in identity terms, with the possibility of choice and negation of the physical character. African descendants' dissatisfaction with their own history and their ability to reflect on it seem to be generating modifications or changes in their own positioning in the social, cultural, economic and religious condition. These changes include to reaffirm and to reactivate their cultural models in the production of a new model that is appropriated for the Brazilian socio-cultural situation. That is why the anti-syncretism discourse has gained strength.

To the extent that the discourses represented in the texts of the corpus are re-articulated, especially the words *brancos* (white) and *negros* (black), in an associative process of dominant and dominated, the anti-syncretism reacts to the syncretism; the latter being the

result of ideologies that support the social inequalities that subordinate the African descendants to the white people. This is due to the permanence of the ideologies of whitening, of the cultural, social and religious perfect mixture and of the racial democracy.

In other words, the syncretism, in this sense, is a hegemonic discourse associated with a non-existent democracy. The anti-syncretistic discourse arises in reaction to it; in response to this hegemonic discourse, struggling for insertion in the society and causing discursive tension as well as the review of the cultural models to which it is bound.

Conceptually, the "mixture" is the best attributed meaning to the term syncretism in the texts. There are 91 occurrences of words that connect the syncretism to the mixture distributed among: *misto*, *mistura*, *misturá-*, *misturada*, *misturadinho*, *misturado*, *misturados*, *misturam*, *misturamos*, *misturando*, *misturar*, *misturaram*, *misturas*, *misturavam*, *misturou* - mixed, mixture, mixtures, mix, to mix, have mixed and mixing.

The analysis, in general, shows that, with this sense of mixing, the syncretism is seen as a "pacifist" discourse, able to end up the conflict and generate confluence which is highlighted in the example below:

9. *Dona Canô fala da confluência dos hinos católicos com os pontos de Candomblé do sincretismo religioso baiano. Tom Zé teoriza que a letra da cantiga de roda "O cravo e a rosa" descreve o defloramento de uma virgem. O pesquisador Antônio Risério afirma que a malícia do Recôncavo é perceptível na voz de João Gilberto, que é de Juazeiro, em "A falsa baiana". E o músico Roberto Mendes avisa: ouvir Caymmi fora da Bahia, nem pensar.* - Dona Cano talks about the confluence of Catholic anthems with the points of the religious syncretism of Candomblé in Bahia. Tom Zé theorizes that the lyrics of the nursery rhyme "o cravo e a rosa" (the clove and the rose) describes the deflowering of a virgin. The researcher Antonio Risério says that the malice of the Recôncavo is noticeable in the voice of João Gilberto who is from Juazeiro, in "A falsa baiana." And the musician Roberto Mendes warns: to listen to Caymmi outside Bahia, no way. (O Globo).

The syncretism is above all a reality linked to the very hybrid constitution of Brazil. It is therefore one of the key words for the understanding of the Brazilian diversity, in discursive terms.

As a lexical item, the term syncretism can be the organizer of lexical relations and the originator of the confluence of different fields and the cultural models associated to them. It can also be the element that allows the textual cohesion, since it redirects different, and most of the times conflicting, discourses, fields and models, linking them pacifically around itself as a head of relational possibilities.

From the anthropological and social point of view, the syncretism is not always seen as positive, contrary to what was observed in the media discourse that tried to construct it mostly as a positive mixture of traits from different cultures, although the *Época* magazine points out to the tension between positivity and negativity, pending for the latter.

Perhaps, that is why that throughout the text whenever the word *sincretismo* occurs, it seems to (re) arrange the other words and/or expressions so that they are not taken as discrepant or conflicting in the place where they occur. Thus, words that indicate different discourses (from *Candomblé*, *Umbanda*, Catholicism, Islamism, etc. or from different fields such as religion, music, theater, concerts, etc.) are used in the same text without causing astonishment. In these

terms, along with the words with the same root, it brings cohesion to the text as a whole and helps in the maintenance of the fields and in the appeasement/attenuation of the tensions among the several discourses and cultural models that are called to dialogue in the texts.

4. Conclusion

The analysis presented here shows not only a socio-cultural pressure exerted by the hegemony of a considerable portion of society, but also a tension between the several other models and discourses involved with Brazilian social, religious, racial and ethnic issues. This hegemonic part of society is still influenced by a Eurocentric cultural model, taken as a historically built and perpetuated pattern that many times leads the African descendants to deny their own condition and identity in the sake of an integration hope.

From the racial standpoint, it seems that the concept of race does not hold anymore, although it still resonates, since it is present in the texts, making emerge an idea of “racialization” which is revealing of a process of transformation of the racism. It is no longer violent, but is assumed in the daily representations. It is grounded in the idea that the racism does not stand anymore, that there is a racial democracy. This assumption was observed in the relations established with the keyword *sincretismo*.

According to Hofbauer (2003, p. 59), the concepts of “white” and “black” were developed as an ideological discourse, which does not take race into account, and is derived from the ideology of whitening which is still been the basis of patrimonial power relations. It is this ideology that, according to the author, became a major argument of the discourse of the Brazilian elite (politicians and scientists) who wanted economical changes, but were still concerned with and feared the possible changes in the once established power relations.

In this sense, the use of the word ethnicity and their variations and inflections reinforces a new way of interpreting socio-cultural traits without the need to rely on a scientific discourse of biological basis, as it happens in the understanding of the concept race. In other words, the combined use of both race and ethnicity as categories in the analysis of representations and social relations creates a discursive tension, since the word race has a biological basis and the word ethnicity presupposes a socio-cultural heritage sharing. That is, the lexical choice itself can reveal the tension between the scientific discourse of a biological basis and one grounded in culture and the social element, reason why the social sciences (particularly Anthropology) have influenced many groups of African descendants. This influence led the African descendants to engage in movements of African-Brazilian religiosity and culture recovery, revaluation and reorganization. This discussion is relevant because discrimination is the behavioral manifestation of prejudice, and is supported by ancient myths and ideologies (especially of the racial democracy and of the whitening) that insist on keeping negative stereotypes and representations to the African descendants. In this sense, this discussion is imperative in order to put down the racism, seen here as an institutionalized practice of discrimination, and, more than that, as an ideological and theoretical construction. This way, racism can be considered a social practice, because it operates through discriminatory practices that are disseminated through language.

Perhaps the only way to end up the problems related to racism and ideologies that support it is to have those movements of African descendants through which they deny everything that erases their ethnic identity with other discourses like the discourse of anti-syncretism

and/or re-Africanization. At those moments, we advocate for a possibility to create new representations, since the prejudice, a negative representation or stereotype are constructions that do not originate in the individual. They are assigned to him by others. In other words, a representation is not inherent to anyone or any group, but it is projected, consciously or unconsciously, by someone else or by another group. And a change or reaction can only be achieved if everyone, without distinction, engages in building a truly democratic Brazil, born from the reconstruction of the negative and stereotyped representations that still "haunt" the Brazilian imaginary.

In the words of Gonçalves (2003, p. 15), "in the game of social representations, mental categories are created that classify us, sometimes deceive us, other times plaster us, but they also construct and reconstruct us". These representations are born in the cultural models that we adopt. This means that it's possible the reaction, the re-articulation and the reconstruction.

According to Farr (2003, p. 41), "language is not only a distinctive feature of human beings, but also, in modern societies, probably almost the only one important source of collective representations". That's why it is necessary that our discourses and representations are reconstructed, creating a pluralistic society that recognizes and respects the difference, making room for the socioeconomic and cultural inclusion of cordial racism marginalized groups, as it is the case of African descendants.

On the other hand, to rethink the relation that can be established between linguistic studies of lexical basis (see Biderman, 2001) and socio-cultural analysis, it is also important to reflect again about the processes used to treat the object of the so-called Lexical Sciences in order to contribute also with language studies. The Lexicology, science that deals with the general lexis of languages, works with the semasiology process of decoding (seeks to "translate" the meaning of a part of an existing item) and, in this sense, relates to the cognition of reality, acting in the analysis of the item to the concept to which it refers. Therefore, a lexical item may indicate views of the world, which can lead human beings to access these views and interact with their environment. This seems to be a way of understanding the meaning of the item syncretism in the media and all that underlies it. In turn, the terminology works with the process called onomasiological, of codification (takes a "phenomenon" and seeks an item that can be labeled) and, in this sense, it is related to the record of experience. That can help us understand one of the possible reasons why some anthropologists do not work with the term syncretism or consider it ambiguous.

In this direction, as it was already mentioned in the introduction of this work, the present study shows the value of the lexis goes beyond its function as a knowledge register element, label of entities or element which carries a meaning in itself, to be understood as an item capable of acting in the construction and representation of a particular "reality". This reality being the result of the dialogism that takes place between the human being and the environment and among the human being, the society and the culture system in which he participates.

In this sense, expanding the study to the established lexical relations with and from the word syncretism brought to light different cultural models and discourses that constitute dialectically the views about this phenomenon / process, with its tensions.

As explained by Warnier (2003), one should not confuse language and culture; however, it is undeniable that both maintain close relations. At this point it is important to highlight the

need of making efforts to work across disciplines and go beyond the single views that are offered when working within the boundaries of isolated disciplines.

This also requires us to look at a language in a different way. This new perspective being able to make it possible to say in line with Santos (2000) that it is time for a transformation of the science and the common sense, which comes from a double and dialectic rupture of the knowledge itself. It is accomplished by observing and rethinking the difference between the sphere of the science and the domain of common sense. This means that it is possible, relying on this dialectic, to transform the way to see this dichotomy, putting down the idea that science and common sense are mutually exclusive. So in doing science, we would not need to get rid of common sense. On the other hand, we would try to change this common sense based on this science. Through this double transformation, while adopting a truly dialectical perspective of this rupture, the researcher should be able to create what he calls a clarified common sense and a prudent science. Therefore, in the author's view, knowledge can establish a clarified practice and this practice, by being wise, can be democratically distributed. This is an important aspiration that imposes a big challenge on the research field. The work presented here is our attempt to gather science and experience, contributing to this debate by exploring the relations among language, society and culture.

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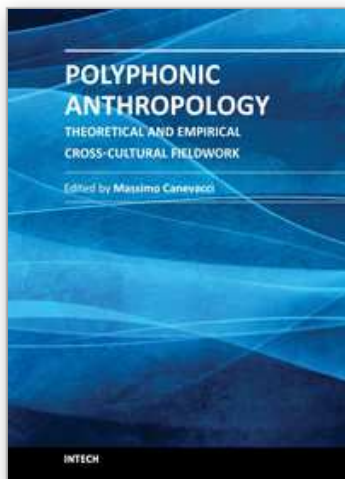
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