

## *I THINK* IN PORTUGUESE

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*I think (that)* represents a [...] complex case of polysemy and different meanings must be interpreted pragmatically by means of contextual cues and background knowledge. (Aijmer 1998: 278)

### **Abstract**

This paper takes Aijmer (1997, 1998) and Simon-Vandenberg's (1998) contrastive work on *I think* as its starting point. In their studies, both Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg show that English *think* is a fuzzy verb and that this becomes particularly evident in a cross-linguistic perspective. Neither Swedish, Dutch or French seems to have one verb corresponding to the whole semantic range of *think*. In this article, the polysemous nature of *think* will be further explored in an English-Portuguese contrastive perspective. The data for the study will be taken from the English-Portuguese parallel corpus COMPARA. Portuguese equivalents of (*I*) *think* will be analysed and the results compared to the findings of Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg.

Keywords: contrastive analysis; corpus linguistics; verb semantics.

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## 1 Introduction

The present study follows in the footsteps of Aijmer (1997, 1998) and Simon-Vandenberg (1998). Both have been concerned with the ambiguity and different uses of the English verb *think* and how its meanings have been translated into other languages — Swedish and Dutch, in particular. These languages do not have one general verb that corresponds to the whole semantic range of *think*. The point of departure of this article is the assumption that the same is true for Portuguese. Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg's findings will be crucial in the analysis of *think* in an English-Portuguese contrastive perspective.

This investigation also follows Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg in focusing on *think* in combination with the first person singular pronoun. The meanings of *I think* have received attention by many scholars and have been explored in the light of diachronic data (Thompson & Mulac 1991, Aijmer 1997) and cross-linguistic data (Aijmer 1997, 1998, Simon-Vandenberg 1998). These studies have contributed to a wider understanding of the uses of *think* in present-day English. The cross-linguistic studies have also opened for new insights into how equivalent verbs operate in other languages.

By contrasting English and Portuguese, this study aims at gaining an even wider understanding of *think* as well as gaining insight into a comparable system of meanings in Portuguese. Corpus-based contrastive studies of the kind presented here have proved valuable in establishing cross-linguistic similarities and differences, "sharpening our conceptions of cross-linguistic correspondences and adding to our knowledge of the languages compared" (Aijmer 1998: 277). The language comparisons in the present study will be carried out on the basis of COMPARA, an English-Portuguese parallel corpus consisting of English and Portuguese original texts with translations into Portuguese and English (see Section 2).

The methodology of using translations as the basis for comparison will be explained in Section 3, while Section 4 gives an

overview of the various meanings of *I think*. An analysis of the corpus material is found in Section 5 and 6. Section 7 explores some shared characteristics of *think* and *achar* 'find/think' in the process of grammaticalization. Finally, Section 8 sums up the findings and offers some concluding remarks.

## 2 Material

The data used in this study is taken from a parallel corpus of English and Portuguese texts, viz. COMPARA. It is an "open-ended corpus of Portuguese and English language texts aligned with their respective English and Portuguese translations" (Frankenberg-Garcia & Santos 2001: 1). For the purpose of the present study I have used both English originals with Portuguese translations and Portuguese originals with English translations. I have tried to match the amount of original data used, and approximately 400,000 original words have been consulted in each direction (English-Portuguese and Portuguese-English).

The corpus contains fictional texts from different varieties of English and Portuguese. In the case of English, the texts are written by British, American, and South African authors, while the Portuguese original texts have been written by authors from Angola, Brazil, Mozambique, and Portugal. The Portuguese original texts have mainly been translated by British or American translators, while the English original texts have been translated by Brazilian or Portuguese translators.

The material includes both contemporary works and non-contemporary works in both languages. The data are thus homogeneous in the sense that they represent different varieties of the languages written by contemporary and non-contemporary authors. In addition, the data have been balanced so as to include an equal amount of text.<sup>1</sup>

One advantage of a parallel corpus of this kind is the inclusion of different authors and translators. This ensures that the linguistic phenomenon studied does not belong to the individual style of one author or translator. COMPARA fulfils this requirement to a large extent, in that it comprises texts by various authors and translators. However, it

should be kept in mind that some authors and translators are represented with more than one text, and in the case of Machado de Assis five texts.<sup>2</sup>

Since the aim here is to study *I think* in a synchronic perspective, it poses some problems that some of the texts date as far back as the late 19th century. Nevertheless, I believe that the results presented below show a remarkable stability in the use of *I think* and its Portuguese equivalents over the last 100 years.

### 3 Method

The basis for the investigation is a corpus of original and translated text, COMPARA. Translations are thus used as a resource in establishing cross-linguistic equivalents, or as Johansson puts it: “Translations provide interesting clues to functional correspondences across languages that might remain undiscovered if the comparison was limited to original texts or to introspective judgments of equivalence” (Johansson 2002: 207).

The translations serve as a mirror where the original meets its mirror-image in the translation. It should not be forgotten at this stage that the language found in translated text has been criticised for being erroneous, be it in the form of translationese or interference.<sup>3</sup> The fact that the corpus includes original and translated text in both languages makes it possible to check for such elements. The present study takes advantage of the structure of the corpus by first looking at Portuguese translations of *I think* (Section 5), then an analysis of the sources of *I think* in English translated text is carried out (Section 6), i.e. Portuguese original text is consulted to establish possible discrepancies between the language used in translations and original text.

### 4 The meanings of *I think*

The polysemous nature of *think* is often attributed to its history as shown by diachronic evidence (cf. Thompson & Mulac 1991 and Aijmer 1997). “We know from various sources [...] that there were

two different verbs in Old English (OE *þencan* and OE *þyncan*) [...]. The meaning of *þyncan* can be paraphrased as 'seem' (*me þuhte* 'it seemed to me') in present-day English while *þencan* expresses opinion (= 'believe')" (Aijmer 1997: 11). In a later development, according to Aijmer, the believe sense acquired two distinguishable senses, viz. 'belief' and 'attitude'.

A diachronic analysis of *think* can help us establish its earliest meanings and developments, but in order to unearth the meanings of the verb in present-day English, we have to turn to other methods. One such method is to compare the uses of *think* across language borders.

In a cross-linguistic comparison of *think*, Aijmer sets up the following figure to illustrate the semantic fuzziness of the verb.

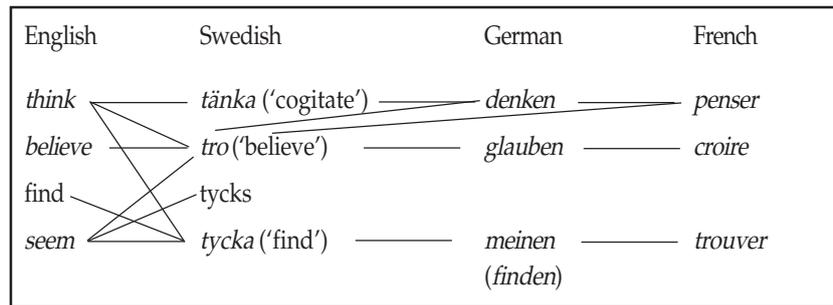


Figure 1 Cross-linguistic equivalents of *think* and related verbs in English, Swedish, German, and French (Aijmer 1997: 14)

Figure 1 illustrates that Swedish, German, and French have no single verb that covers all meanings of *think*, i.e. 'cogitate', 'believe', 'find'. Interestingly, the three languages seem to make similar distinctions as regards the meanings of *think*. Since this study concerns a Romance language, let us take a closer look at the French equivalents. According to the pattern shown in Figure 1, *penser* takes on the meaning of both 'cogitate' and 'believe', *croire* typically corresponds to the 'believe' meaning, while *trouver* typically

corresponds to 'find'. The question to ask is whether Portuguese shows a similar tendency with the cognate verbs *pensar* 'cogitate', *crer* 'believe', and *achar* 'find'.

The 'believe' and 'find' meanings in present-day English can be seen as extensions of the more prototypical meaning of 'cogitate'. This study only focuses on meanings that express the speaker's attitude, representing either 'belief' or 'opinion', i.e. 'believe' and 'find', and not examples that express indirect thought, or cogitation, e.g. (1).

- (1) *A being from the Other Side has slithered around her soul, I think, and my first urge is to run.* (EURZ1(19))

Further, the study focuses on non-negated *think* with a first-person subject used in epistemic contexts,<sup>4</sup> i.e. where *I think* expresses the speaker's attitude towards a proposition. Example (2) expresses belief and example (3) expresses opinion:

- (2) *I think I'm going to evening classes to learn Spanish.* (EJBT1(1019))
- (3) *Ma, I must say I think she looks great.* (ESNG2(1755))

In (2) the speaker holds a belief that is verifiable to some degree; such examples are connected with evidence and uncertainty and may be paraphrased in the following manner: *I will probably be going to evening classes to learn Spanish*. By comparison, in (3), the speaker clearly makes a subjective evaluation of something, i.e. in the speaker's opinion someone looks great. A paraphrase expressing uncertainty does not make sense: *?She probably looks great*. Aijmer terms the latter of these uses 'subjective evaluation', while she splits the former into 'subjective opinion' and 'belief evidential'. The difference between 'subjective evaluation' as shown in (3) and 'subject opinion' (4) is that 'subject opinion' is not based on the speaker's personal expression or sense impression.

- (4) “*I think* I’d better be going back inside,” said Philip.  
(EBDL3T1(1373))

In cases like (4), “[t]he meaning is referred to as subjective opinion since the speaker is certain and does not base himself on evidence” (Aijmer 1998: 282). Additionally, Aijmer groups hedges of the kind found in (5) together with ‘belief evidential’.

- (5) They are rather afraid of her, *I think*; she looks as if she had been married already, and you know they don’t like married women. (EUHJ1(554))

*I think* as a hedge can also occur in initial position (without *that*), functioning as an epistemic phrase, and is difficult to distinguish from the ‘belief evidential’ in cases where the subordinating conjunction *that* is absent and it is not clear whether *I think* has prosodic prominence (only possible for ‘belief evidential’). If interpreted as a hedge, *I think* adds tentativeness to the proposition. Example (6) is a case in point.

- (6) The second-year groups are rather hard going, especially the Joint Honours, but the first-year group is quite lively, and *I think* you’ll find the two final-year groups very interesting.  
(EBDL3T1(938))

In her study, Aijmer (1998) found that Swedish mainly has two expressions corresponding to *I think*, viz. *jag tror* and *jag tycker*. The tendency is for the former to translate *I think* when it is used as a belief evidential or a hedge, while the latter typically corresponds to *I think* when it expresses subjective evaluation or a personal opinion.

In the following section I will explore the Portuguese correspondences of *I think* in the light of the framework outlined above.

## 5 Portuguese correspondences of *I think*

In the previous section, three Portuguese correspondences of *think* were mentioned, viz. *pensar* 'cogitate'/'believe', *crer* 'believe', and *achar* 'find'. In addition to these, the COMPARA material yielded yet another three correspondences of some significance, viz. *julgo* 'I judge', a form of the impersonal reflexive *parecer-me* 'seem to me', and *em minha opinião* 'in my opinion'. Table 1 shows the distribution of the different verbs in the corpus.

Table 1 Portuguese correspondences of *I think* in COMPARA

Portuguese correspondence of <i>I think</i>	No.	%
<i>acho</i> 'I find'	63	46.7%
Ø (zero)	25	18.5%
<i>penso</i> / <i>estou a pensar</i> (1) 'I cogitate'	15	11.1%
<i>julgo</i> 'I judge'	9	6.7%
(form of) <i>parecer-me</i> 'seem to me'	7	5.2%
<i>creio</i> / <i>estou em crer</i> (1) 'I believe'	6	4.4%
<i>em minha opinião</i> 'in my opinion'	3	2.2%
other (1 occurrence each) <sup>5</sup>	7	5.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>135<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>100%</b>

The two most interesting observations that can be made from Table 1 is the overwhelming use of *acho* to translate *I think* and the high number of Ø-correspondences. The Ø-correspondences are of two types, either the whole sentence has been left out in the translation, or an element corresponding to *I think* has been left out, e.g. (7).

- (7) *I think* I'll go back to bed and see if I can get a few hours' kip before sparrowfart. (EBDL1T1(673))  
 Vou deitar-me para ver se ainda consigo dormir um bocadinho antes de ser dia.  
 Lit.: (I) am going to lie me to see if ...

17 of the 25  $\emptyset$ -occurrences are of this type. In the remaining eight instances, we can only speculate as to why the translators have chosen not to translate the sentence. What is clear is that *I think* is not the main reason why they have left out certain passages. As regards the other 17 instances, there may be various reasons for leaving out an expression corresponding to *I think*. Could it be that the hedge use of *I think* is less common with the Portuguese counterparts? Is Portuguese a more direct language and not tentative to the same extent as English? We will return to these questions when we have analysed the material in more detail.

Let us now take a look at the meanings of *I think* in our material and how the Portuguese translations are distributed across the different meanings.

Table 2 Distribution of the meanings of *I think* in COMPARA

Meaning	No.	%
subjective opinion	23	17%
subjective evaluation	19	14.1%
hedge / belief evidential	89	65.9%
unclear examples	4	3%
	<b>135</b>	<b>100%</b>

If we compare the meanings of *I think* in the COMPARA material with Aijmer's English-Swedish material, we find a fairly similar distribution. This does not come as a surprise since the primary material for both studies is taken from literary fiction. Compared to Simon-Vandenberg's study of *I think* in parliamentary debates, the meanings have a different distribution. In her study, the predominant meaning was that of subjective opinion, underlining the fact that politicians express "certainty and authority rather than uncertainty and hesitation" (Simon-Vandenberg 1998: 297).

Table 2 shows that the hedge / belief evidential group is by far the most common meaning of *I think* in our material (65%), followed by subjective opinion (17%), and subjective evaluation (approx. 13%),

respectively. There are also six instances that have been labelled unclear. In these cases the context does not give enough clues as to what is really meant, e.g. (8).

- (8) It should have the dignity of a ceremony, as well as its unreality, and should combine the insincere character of a romantic play with the wit and beauty that make such plays delightful to us. Is insincerity such a terrible thing? *I think* not. (EBOW1(1181-1183))

In this case I have not been able to interpret the context in favour of a subjective evaluation or belief evidential reading.

There are also borderline cases that I have chosen to classify, although they are vague between two meanings, e.g. (9).

- (9) "Lizzie," Frances said, "I knew his mind and my mind, and I knew what I was doing and I've done it and I'm thrilled and I'm terrified and *I think* I'm right and *I think* I'm wrong." (EBJT2(800))

Example (9) serves to illustrate that the meanings identified for *I think* are by no means absolute, or clear-cut. Rather, there is a cline where the meanings blend into each other. I have labelled the two instances of *I think* in example (9) as subjective evaluation, although belief evidential or hedge could perhaps be defended. My choice is due to the interpretation of *right* and *wrong* as 'value words' (cf. Aijmer 1998: 281), and hence we get a reading that is based on the speaker's experience of the situation.

Above it has been shown how *I think* has been translated into Portuguese, and what meanings *I think* has in our material. Let us now combine the two and see what Portuguese translations have been used to capture the various meanings of *I think*. Table 3 gives an overview.

Table 3 Meanings of *I think* with Portuguese translations

Portuguese translation	subjective opinion	subjective evaluation	hedge / belief evidential	unclear examples
<i>acho</i>	13 (56.5%)	9 (50%)	40 (45.5%)	1
Ø	6 (26.1%)	5 (22.2%)	13 (14.8%)	1
<i>penso</i>		2 (11.1%)	12 (13.6%)	1
<i>creio</i>	1 (4.3%)	2 (11.1%)	3 (3.4%)	
<i>julgo</i>	1 (4.3%)	1 (5.6%)	7 (8%)	
<i>parecer-me</i>			7 (6.8%)	
<i>em minha opinião</i>	1 (4.3%)		2 (2.3%)	
other	1 (4.3%)		5 (5.6%)	1
	23	19	89	4

The most noticeable observation that can be made from Table 3 is the use of *acho* as the preferred translation equivalent of all meanings of *I think*. The following three examples illustrates *acho* as a translation when *I think* has the meaning of subjective opinion, subjective evaluation, and hedge/belief evidential, respectively.

- (10) “*I think* I’d better be going back inside,” said Philip. (EBDL3T1(1373))  
 “*Acho* que é melhor eu ir andando lá para dentro,” disse Philip.
- (11) “*I think* you’re wonderful,” Robert said. (EBJT2(523))  
 — Eu *acho*-a maravilhosa — disse Robert.
- (12) “*I think* I’ll do it again tomorrow.” (EBJT1(1664))  
 — *Acho* que vou fazer o mesmo amanhã.

Aijmer’s rule of thumb was that “*think* can be translated into Swedish *tycka* when it does not mean ‘believe’” (1997: 14). *Jag tycker* ‘I

find' would be the typical choice to translate *I think* in example (11), as would *acho*. Examples (10) and (12) would typically have *jag tror* 'I believe' in a Swedish translation. From this it can be inferred that Portuguese would prefer *creio* in these examples; and *creio* has indeed been used in similar contexts, but not to the same extent as *acho*.

Subjective opinion:

- (13) "Indeed, *I think* you may not have to worry at all."  
(EJB2(967))

— Aliás, *creio* mesmo que não precisa de se preocupar nada.

Subjective evaluation:

- (14) Without being asked, Franklin went on, "*I think* these visitors to the ship are quite serious." (EJB2(816))  
— Sem que lho pedissem, Franklin acrescentou: — *Creio* que estes nossos visitantes têm intenções e objectivos muito firmes.

Hedge:

- (15) "You, Mr Hughes, *I think*, do not have to worry so soon."  
(EJB2(965))  
-- Quanto a si, Mr Hughes, *creio* que não precisa de se preocupar tão cedo.

In examples (13) and (15), *creio* is used to reflect a belief. (14), however, I have labelled as an instance of subjective evaluation, and we would not expect *creio* as a correspondence of *I think*. Again it should be stressed that the classification is fuzzy, and not absolute; the use of *creio* in the translation indicates that the translator has interpreted *I think* in the 'believe' sense and not, as I have done, in the 'find' sense. I therefore think that it can be concluded that *creio* does not easily lend itself to a subjective evaluation reading. In addition, we should bear in mind that it is difficult to draw any hard and fast conclusions on the basis of so few examples as is the case here.

*Julgo*, *penso*, and *parecer-me* are only found to correspond to subjective evaluation and hedge/belief evidential. This suggests that they do not express certainty on the part of the speaker; the domains of these verbs are rather uncertain.

- (16) *I think* that while my mother was alive and my brother was a baby my parents arranged their activities so that one of them was in the clear, always, one would always have a good chance of being left behind to carry on the household if the other were arrested. (ESNG2(313))

*Julgo* que, enquanto a minha mãe era viva e o meu irmão era bebé, os meus pais combinavam as suas actividades de forma a um deles estar sempre livre de suspeitas, um deles ter sempre boas possibilidades de ficar para cuidar da casa se o outro fosse preso.

- (17) “Maybe they do,” Jenny said, “but *I think* I’m worse than most.” (EBJT2(522))

— Talvez, mas *penso* que sou pior do que a maioria.

- (18) Sally came — at least *I think* she did. (EBDL1T1(1346))

A Sally veio-se — pelo menos, *pareceu-me* que sim.

To sum up, the pattern that emerges on the basis of the Portuguese translations is that *acho* seems to have acquired almost the same status as *I think* as a polysemous verb. *Acho* has been used convincingly to express subjective opinion, subjective evaluation, and belief evidential / hedge.

We started out by claiming that the different meanings of *I think* could be traced back to the prototypical meaning of ‘cogitate’. In the case of *acho*, this is less likely, since its core meaning is that of ‘find’. In the 16 examples from COMPARA where *I think* has been used as a verb of cogitation, e.g. (19), *penso* is the only verb used in the Portuguese translations.

- (19) Opening my eyes, I think: *I must check Solomon's apartment, talk to his sister.* (EURZ1(2448))  
 Abrindo os olhos, penso: "*Tenho de ir ver a casa de Salomão, falar com a irmã dele.*"

This serves to illustrate that *pensar* is still very much tied to the sense of cogitation, while *achar* is a more general verb covering the extended meanings of English 'cogitate'.

So far we have only looked at Portuguese translations of *I think*. Since translation is sometimes accused of representing a special kind of language - 'translated language' as opposed to 'original language', it will be interesting to see to what an extent this is true in the case of *I think* and its Portuguese equivalents. In the following section, therefore, we will focus on what Portuguese verbs or expressions give rise to *I think* in translated text, i.e. what are the Portuguese sources of *I think*?

## 6 Portuguese sources of *I think*

In this section we will examine the results of the foregoing section by looking at *I think* through Portuguese originals, i.e. cases where *I think* has been used to translate a Portuguese verb or expression. Table 4 gives an overview of the Portuguese verbs that have *I think* as a translation.

Table 4 Portuguese sources of *I think* in COMPARA

Portuguese sources of <i>I think</i>	No.	%
<i>acho</i> 'I find'	44	50.6%
Ø	3	3.5%
<i>penso</i> 'I cogitate'	5	5.7%
<i>julgo</i> 'I judge'	1	1.2%
<i>parece-me</i> 'seem to me'	4	4.6%
<i>creio</i> 'I believe'	25	28.7%
other (1 occurrence each) <sup>7</sup>	5	5.7%
	<b>87<sup>8</sup></b>	<b>100%</b>

If we compare the figures in Table 4 with those in Table 1, three interesting observations can be made.

First, Portuguese original text confirms the status of *acho* as the most common correspondence of *I think*; *acho* is the source of *I think* in more than 50% of the cases. To find out whether the meaning of *acho* is as polysemous as suggested in Section 5, we will analyse its meanings below.

Second, *creio* is the source of *I think* in 28.7% of the instances and is the only other verb that can compete with *acho* as a correspondence of *I think*. This deviates strongly from the results presented in Table 1 where *creio* was found as a translation of *I think* in a mere 4.4% of the cases. The figures suggest that *creio* is underused in the translations of *I think*.

Third, in translations from English into Portuguese (cf. Table 1), *pensar* was used in about 11% of the cases to translate *I think*. In original text (cf. Table 4), *penso* was only used in 5.7% of the cases as a source of *I think*. This strengthens the opinion that *pensar* is typically used to express cogitation, and only occasionally can be used to express belief.

With reference to Table 4, there are a couple of minor points worth commenting on. There are three instances where *I think* has been added without having a definite source in the original text, e.g. (20).

- (20) É melhor começar já a abrir a tua cova, mulher. (PMMC1(20))  
*I think* it better that we start digging your grave now.

The use of *I think* can be interpreted as an expression of subjective opinion or it can be seen as a hedge. The presence of *melhor/better* suggests the former; the speaker is certain, and the Portuguese author has felt no need to include an element of tentativeness or uncertainty. Since this is a minor category, I would not like to draw any definite conclusions, but it may be an indication that English prefers to be less direct, even in situations where the speaker is absolutely certain.

The final point that I wish to mention in connection with Table 4 is the use, or non-use, of *julgo*. *Julgo* was found as a translation of *I think* in 6.7% of the occurrences in Table 1, whereas it is only used once as a source of *I think* (1.2%). We can only speculate, but the overuse of both

*pensar* and *julgar* in translations of *I think* may have blocked a more idiomatic translation with *crer*. Data from original text suggests that *crer* is a more natural choice than *pensar* and *julgar* in similar contexts.

Let us now move on to examine the meanings of *I think* in translated text. An overview is given in Table 5.

Table 5 Distribution of the meanings of *I think* in translated text

Meaning	No.	%
subjective opinion	14	16.1%
subjective evaluation	9	10.3%
hedge / belief evidential	58	66.6%
unclear examples	6	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100%</b>

There is a striking similarity to the meanings of *I think* in original text — the only difference is that there are slightly fewer cases of subjective evaluation (cf. Table 2). This strikes me as coincidental rather than linguistically significant. More important is how the Portuguese sources are distributed over the various meanings. Table 6 shows the meanings of *I think* in translated text and its Portuguese sources.

Table 6 Meanings of *I think* and its Portuguese sources

Portuguese source	subjective opinion	subjective evaluation	hedge / belief evidential	unclear examples
<i>acho</i>	6 (42.9%)	7 (77.8%)	28 (48.3%)	3
∅	2 (14.3%)		1 (1.7%)	
<i>penso</i>	1 (7.1%)	1 (11.1%)	2 (3.4%)	1
<i>creio</i>	4 (8.6%)	1 (11.1%)	18 (31%)	2
<i>julgo</i>			1 (1.7%)	
<i>parecer-me</i>	1 (7.1%)		3 (5.2%)	
other			5 (8.6%)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>6</b>

Again a comparison with *I think* in original text is in order. The figures confirm that *acho* is the closest Portuguese equivalent of *I think*. *Acho* in original text takes on all meanings defined for *I think* in an overwhelming majority of the cases. Examples (21)-(23) are the mirror image of examples (10)-(12) in the foregoing section.

Subjective opinion:

- (21) *Acho* que tenho que ir à Polícia, entendeu? (PBRF2(1515))  
*I think* I'd better contact the police.

Subjective evaluation:

- (22) "Deixa eu ver... restaurante... restaurante... esse aqui *acho* que é bom..." (PBRF1(2419))  
 "Let's see... restaurants... restaurants... *I think* this one's good..."

Hedge / belief evidential:

- (23) Tenho lido bastante e *acho* que vou aprender novos idiomas. (PBCB1(193))  
 I've been reading a lot and *I think* I'm going to study new languages.

I believe the evidence from both translated and original text establishes *acho* as a true correspondence to *I think*. This differs from the findings of Aijmer (1998) and Simon-Vandenberg (1998) since it is the 'find'-verb in Portuguese that has taken on the more general role. Aijmer found that for Swedish it was the 'believe' verb *tro* that showed most flexibility. Simon-Vandenberg found that Dutch *ik vind* 'I find' was the verb typically used in the sense of subjective evaluation, while *ik denk* 'I cogitate' and *ik geloof* 'I believe' were used to express 'belief'. Between these two extremes all three verbs were used for meanings in between, including subjective opinion. Simon-Vandenberg states that "speakers tend to operate mostly on a scale between 'probability-based opinion' and 'impression-based subjective evaluation'" (1998: 309-310).

'Probability-based opinion' corresponds to Aijmer's hedge / belief evidential, while 'impression-based subjective evaluation' corresponds to subjective evaluation.

Further, in Aijmer's cross-linguistic overview including French (cf. Figure 1), *trouver* was seen to extend no further than the 'find' sense. Table 6 also shows that *acho* is used in almost 80% of the cases to reflect subjective evaluation or 'find'. This illustrates that the core meaning is still deeply rooted in *acho*. However, its use in other senses is also overwhelming, and the only sense of *I think* not covered by *acho* seems to be that of cogitation.

Returning now to Table 6 again, we observe that *creio*, not surprisingly, is typically used in the 'belief' sense, e.g. (24); only four of the 18 occurrences of *creio* in the hedge / belief evidential group were classified as typical hedges, e.g. (25).

(24) *Creio que usou delas, em rapaz, entre 1801 e 1812.*  
(PBMA1(825))  
*I think* he wore them when he was young, between 1801 and 1812.

(25) *De longe a longe os criados vinham limpá-lo, creio.*  
(PPSC2(36))

Very occasionally, the servants would go up there and do a bit of cleaning, *I think*.

By looking at Portuguese sources of *I think*, we have confirmed the widespread use of *acho* in the Portuguese language as an expression extending beyond its original sense of finding and its extension 'subjective evaluation'; it is also commonly used to express tentativeness ('hedge'), uncertainty ('belief evidential'), and subjective certainty ('subjective opinion').

In this section, we have also seen that *creio* has a much larger role as an expression of belief than was first thought after examining Portuguese translations only.

## 7 *Think* and *achar*

The uses of *think* that have been discussed in this study are what could be termed a grammaticalized form of the verb, i.e. it is not only *think* in its original syntactic environment (as main verb followed by a *that* clause), nor is it *think* in its original sense of cogitation. Aijmer argues, with Thompson and Mulac (1991), that *I think* has gone from a 'main clause construction into an epistemic adverb' (Aijmer 1997: 2), in a process of grammaticalization (or pragmaticalization, which is the term Aijmer prefers). It is interesting to note, then, that in an article on modality and grammaticalization, Casseb-Galvão & Gonçalves suggest a similar grammaticalization process for *achar*.

The two verbs — *think* and *achar* — have followed similar paths in a grammaticalization process in going from main verb (with a particular meaning), via a stage as an epistemic modal to an epistemic parenthetical (or adverb-like verb). A comparison is made in Figure 2.

Development of <i>think</i>	Stages in the grammaticalization of <i>think</i> <sup>1</sup>	Stages in the grammaticalization of <i>achar</i> <sup>1</sup>	Development of <i>achar</i>
function: main verb complement: NP sense: cogitate	I left the flat, caught my train, and <b>thought</b> no more about it. (EBDL1T1(20))	O trem teve um atraso de apenas doze minutos e <b>achei</b> meu carro,... (EBDL1T2(1270)) The train was only twelve minutes late in the end, and I <b>found</b> my car,	function: main verb complement: NP sense: find (discover/obtain)
function: main verb complement: <i>that</i> -clause sense: cogitate / believe / find	"Sometimes I <b>think</b> that I could sleep for a century or two," he says. (EURZ1(672))	" <b>Acho</b> o nome Carlota mais bonito do que Danusa", eu disse. (PBRF2(711)) "I <b>think</b> Carlota's a prettier name	function: main verb complement: NP + ADJP sense: find / believe (opinion)

		than Danusa," I said. (Lit.: I find the name Carlota more pretty ...)	
function: epistemic modal complement: $\emptyset$ - <i>that</i> -clause sense: believe / find	I <b>think</b> I'm a natural twin, I feel one, ... EJBT2(1815)	— <b>Acho</b> que ele está apaixonado— disse Lu. (PBMR1(707)) "I <b>think</b> he's in love," Lu said. (Lit.: I think that he's in love...)	function: epistemic modal complement: <i>que</i> -clause sense: believe / find
function: epistemic parenthetical complement: $\emptyset$ sense: believe	First time I've had one from them, I <b>think</b> . (EBDL1T1(1300))	Exagerou um tudonada, <b>acho</b> eu, especialmente quando, ainda no átrio, ancilas deitaram pétalas de rosa sobre os recém-chegados. (PPMC1(674))She overdid it a bit, I <b>think</b> , especially when, still in the atrium, slave women tossed rose petals over the new arrivals. (Lit.: (She) overdid a bit, think I, ...)	function: epistemic parenthetical complement: $\emptyset$ sense: believe

Figure 2 Development of *think* and *achar*

Although the two verbs started out with different meanings, it is quite clear that they through time have come quite close to each other in other respects. Although there are other verbs in Portuguese that

may be seen to follow a similar path, e.g. *parecer* (cf. Casseb-Galvão & Gonçalves 2001), it is *acho* that has gained ground on a par with *I think* in English.

It should also be stressed that neither verb is fully grammaticalized, i.e. they do not serve a grammatical function only, all uses and meanings displayed in Figure 2 are still in use.

## 8 Concluding remarks

This study has shown that there is one verb in Portuguese that typically corresponds to epistemic *I think*, viz. *acho*. We can summarise the main findings as follows:

- *acho* is the Portuguese expression that most commonly corresponds to *I think*, when *I think* is not used in the sense of ‘cogitate’, both in translated and original texts;
- *penso* has been used to translate *I think* to express tentativeness / belief (hedge / belief evidential) — this use is not substantiated to any degree by the original Portuguese material;
- *creio* is used to translate *I think* in a mere 4.4% of the cases, while it is the source of *I think* in almost 30% of the cases — this discrepancy suggests that *creio* is widely underused by translators to express belief.

In addition, it was shown in the foregoing section that *acho* and *I think* have developed similarly and can be found as main verbs, modal-like verbs, and adverb-like modals.

With reference to Figure 1 it does perhaps come as a surprise that it is the ‘find’ verb that has taken on a general position in the verbal sub-system of thinking. However, the contrastive analysis leaves no doubt as to the position of *acho* as an expression of epistemic content.

To answer the question whether Portuguese is a more direct language than English on the basis of this study does not seem right. A more thorough investigation of markers of directness in the two languages would give a better and more informed answer.

This investigation has also shown that contrastive studies benefit strongly from the use of parallel corpora such as COMPARA. Even if we have gained some insight into the cross-linguistic network of *I think*, the study leaves some questions unanswered. What would a thorough analysis of the Portuguese equivalents of *I think* in original text have yielded? Would a delimitation of the material to include only contemporary texts have given a different result? In what ways would a more detailed study of the grammaticalization processes of *think* and *achar* (and other Portuguese equivalents) have given more insight into the area epistemic parentheticals in the two languages? These are but a few topics for further research.

### Notes

1. For a more detailed account of the structure and contents of the corpus, see Frankenberg-Garcia & Santos (2003) and <http://www.linguateca.pt/COMPARA>.
2. See <http://www.linguateca.pt/COMPARA/Conteudo.html#Textos> for an overview of the texts in the corpus.
3. Translationese can be defined as an unnatural distribution of items in the target text as a result of source language influence, while interference is a kind of error found in the target text that is influenced by the source language; the form of the original affects the form of the translation.
4. Epistemic modality is concerned with 'the speaker's assumptions or assessment of possibilities, and in most cases it indicates the speaker's confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition expressed' (Coates 1995: 55).
5. The translations include: *por exemplo* 'for example', *tenho a impressão* 'I have the impression', *deve* 'should', *suponho* 'I suppose', *estou convencida* 'I am convinced', *se calhar* 'probably' (lit. 'if happen'), *será* 'will be'.

6. In addition there were 16 occurrences of *I think* 'cogitate', all of which were rendered by *penso*.
7. The sources include: *cuido* 'I care', *presumo* 'I presume', *suponho* 'I suppose', *a minha opinião* 'my opinion', *pode* 'can'.
8. In addition there were three occurrences of indirect thought; the Portuguese sources were a form of *pensar* (2) and *adivinho*.
9. For a more detailed account of the grammaticalization (pragmaticalization) of *think*, see Aijmer (1997).
10. For a more detailed account of the grammaticalization of *achar*, see Casseb-Galvão & Gonçalves (2001).

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