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Language, Literacy and Linguistic Diversity in Portugal:

Past and Present Discourses

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Abstract: This paper traces some accounts of what it means to be good readers, writers and speakers of languages in discourses about literacy and linguistic diversity in recent Portuguese history. Discourses about *literacy as decontextualised skills* and *literacy as contextualised practice* emerged and re-emerged in cyclical fashion inside and outside national territorial borders, at local, national and global scales from the Estado Novo's moral politics to the global liberal politics regarding the Portuguese language in the early 21st century. I point to the need to follow trajectories of language and literacy discourses as they intersect with other discourses related to class, race, ethnicity or nation and I propose a historical, ecological and material approach to *literacy-in-action* in multilingual Portuguese speaking contexts, an approach which would be based on multi-sited collaborative research.
Keywords: literacy, linguistic diversity, discourse, European Portuguese, contemporary history of Portugal, literacy-in-action.

1. Introduction

This paper identifies some of the discourses about literacy and linguistic diversity and about who count as legitimate average speakers, writers and readers in Portuguese society. It traces these discourses across different cultural and political moments in recent Portuguese history. By following the trajectories of local, national and global discourses, it also identifies how some of these discursive shifts happened in relevant affinity points of time and space as local, national and global interests intersected in cyclic fashion. Focusing on the points of intersection of discursive trajectories will allow me to disentangle some of the ideologies involved in the production of language and literacy value, in contexts where European Portuguese has been and is being spoken, written and used as a resource.

I start with the understanding that *literacy* is best explained with a focus on the ecologies of people, texts and written practice in many spaces of social life in the light of historical-material, political-economic, socio-discursive and sociocultural factors

(Blommaert, 2008; Barton, 2007; Baynham and Prinsloo, 2009; Hamilton, 2012; Papen, 2012). Grounded on a sound tradition within the history of education and literacy in Portugal, Rui Ramos' (1988) historical-demographic study of the late 19th – early 20th century literacy rates in mainland Portugal states the need to move beyond the national scale to identify local practices – that he calls 'literacy and illiteracy cultures' resulting from sociocultural access to natural (geographical and territorial), material (historical, economic, and political) and also symbolic resources in the intersection of territorial property and social hierarchy, gender, class, and religion – that give differentiated hegemonic value to literacy, hence differently situated cultural attitudes towards, and investments in, access to writing (Ramos, 1988: 1109-1114). For the Portuguese context, this study provides one possible historical and material starting point to further understand how literacy is being fashioned by local and global, economic, cultural and historical trajectories and forces, and how it is implicated and acts in local semiotic and creative processes of individual and societal transformation (Papen, 2012; Keating and Solovova, 2011).

When articulated with the attempt to understand the discursive conditions that afford possibilities of recognition, or lack thereof, of *linguistic diversity* in Portugal, this historical, material and ecological approach helps disassemble a keystone long durational hegemonic link where European Portuguese is concerned – the one between language, territory, and an imagined central, monolingual, national (and imperial) identity, *as if* language *is* territory (cf. Azevedo, 2005: 13; Rossa and Ribeiro, 2015: 26-28). We need historical clarification of how this nationalist linguistic ideology came into being. In spite of the recent geopolitical changes in the colonial/national territory, this articulation lingered in the recent history, inscribed in the discourses produced by the elites in Portugal. It thus makes sense to track the territorial and geopolitical changes, as they inform on the dynamics of stability and transformation in language and literacy value, with material implications in the situated literacy work.

I start by presenting the broad contours of recent political history of Portugal, as I highlight how language has been central in the symbolic imagination of Portuguese national identity and territory. I then trace how discourses about literacy, language and the idea of good legitimate speakers, readers and writers shifted across different historical periods – and how their cyclic re-emergence can be explained in terms of late modern and postcolonial historical process and the corresponding languages of description regarding language and literate activity. I end the paper by suggesting how one can overpass some

of the conceptual impasses regarding literacy and linguistic diversity in multilingual European Portuguese contexts, and how this might contribute to a historical material ecological approach based on multi-sited collaborative research.

2. Broad Contours of Political History in Portugal: Language *as if* Territory

Located in an impoverished southwestern Iberian territory facing the Atlantic Ocean, Portugal holds one of the oldest and steadiest European national borders, a population mainly settled along the western coastal line. Differentiated north/south distribution of property and socio-economic hierarchy, along with the gap between isolated interior rural localities and urban cities, have produced significant local linguistic diversity, extensively described by language and literacy historians (Cardeira, 2006; Ramos, 1988; Ostler, 2005). With a historical past of economic and financial crisis and poverty, traces of Portuguese national identity result from the movements of people and goods beyond Europe, across the oceans as seafarers, explorers, settlers and economic migrants of one of the first early modern and the longest-lived European colonial empire (15th-20th century). Portuguese acted as one of the earliest European languages of conquest and commerce, resulting in material and immaterial traces of Portuguese heritage and creolization across the globe (Holm, 2000); lived experience of overseas colonial contact in early modernity is thus the 'substance' underlying grammatical descriptions by Christian missionaries (Maia, 2010; Ribeiro, 2015). These are long durational traces in a national identity that embodies the idea that language, more than economy, geography or political power, is a primary foundation of an all-encompassing mythic, imagined and symbolic territory. Based on a fragile, incomplete consciousness and conviction of centrality, it is part of a contemporary Portuguese 'identity condition' that Eduardo Lourenço has called the *colonial myth* (Lourenço, 2014).[2]

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[2] Aspects of this colonial myth are partially mirrored in postcolonial and transnational projects where the Portuguese language has played emancipatory roles, as a 'trophee of war', in the words of Angolan writer Luandino Vieira (Ribeiro, 2015: 27-29). It is also evoked, with distinct underlying agendas based on collective memory, resistance, trauma or pragmatic strategy, in the recent cultural, political-economic Portuguese-based concept of *lusophony*. Fabrício has called it a fragile mirage of a cultural space shared by a utopian transnational hypercollectivity of over 200 million Portuguese speaking individuals worldwide, strategically voiced in distinct political and economic alliances, such as the Community of Portuguese Language Countries, or CPLP, a transnational organization existing since 1996 (Fabricio, 2015: 67). There is space to suggest, though, that fragments of this imagined collective cultural identity based on colonial Portugal prevail, by resistance, appropriation or reproduction. As heritage tokens – situated in multiple temporalities and geopolitical configurations – they tend to be voiced strategically as chronotopes in performative displays of stylization, authenticity, normativity throughout the world, in communicative

In the past hundred years, what counted as Portugal's geopolitical territory – hence target for policy – shifted from a 19th century colonial empire overseas to a peripheral post-colonial southern European democratic nation state in the 21st century. Brazil gained independence in 1822; a democratic First Republic was established in 1910, to be followed by a post-war authoritarian regime in 1926, throughout the Spanish Civil War and World War II over a period of 48 years – the *Estado Novo*; with the Colonial War and the Carnation Revolution led by the military in 1974, democracy was restored in the mainland territory and independence was finally granted to all colonies,[3] with the exception of Macau (handed over to China in 1999). A member state of the European Union since 1986, Portugal holds sovereignty over the mainland territory and the Atlantic archipelagos of the Azores and Madeira with administrative autonomy since 1976.[4]

Over this period, the topic of (il)literacy circulated as a tool of governmentality across discourses produced by institutional and intellectual elites in the mainland, in the islands, in the colonies and the diaspora, with effects among speakers of migrant and postcolonial Portuguese heritage. National discourses and those produced by external international agencies were articulated into official texts in three historical moments: one, post-World War II Marshall Plan; two, in the aftermath of the 1974-1976 revolutionary period, with European integration in 1986; finally, in the turn of the 21st century, with the emergence of BRICS economies and the corresponding market value of Portuguese in the world (in tandem with the development of information technologies and global Internet). The following section traces some of these moments, shedding light on the politics of recognition of 'good legitimate' readers, writers and speakers. I start by acknowledging the role of Portuguese language and literacies within the colonial order and in spaces of diaspora. Even though I highlight the production of discourses and policies in the mainland territory, I hope to illustrate that these values navigate across complex colonial, diasporic, insular and mainland spaces, feeding on each other.

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networks and practices associated to cultural heritage, nation-building, diasporic, as well as mobile and digital contexts (cf. Koven, 2007, 2013; Koven and Marques, 2015). A literacy perspective on this would focus on how its materiality acts in multilingual and multi-literate repertoires, where Portuguese is part of the ecology.

[3] Goa, Damão and Diu were formally incorporated into the Republic of India in 1962.

[4] Their language and literacy policies and values follow particular trajectories, best understood by acknowledging isolation from the mainland, the role of migration and exile, as well as local sociocultural aspects beyond dominant centres of cultural and economic production, among others Lisbon. For literary and cultural understandings of the development of diasporic identities, e.g. Azorean, cf. Almeida, 1987.

3. Spaces for Portuguese Language and Literacy over Time

3.1. Portuguese and Literacies within the Colonial Order

Influenced by the role of religious orders and Catholic missionaries, Portuguese language and literacy regimes were crucial in the construction of different categories of citizenship in most Portuguese colonies. For example, in the African countries, *indigenous citizenship was assigned to* black Africans, provided they recognized the foundational elements of the colonial order (regarding religion, moral values and with ethic, and, above all, mastery of spoken and written Portuguese, cf. Stroud, 2007: 34-37). The key criterion of mastery of Portuguese had crucial effects on the emergent class of the *assimilados*. Religious missions, Catholic churches and the colonial state, together with civil society organizations (mainly led by literate *assimilados)*, were active in investing in the strategic use and symbolic appropriation of Portuguese in the public sphere, to the detriment of local African languages. This discriminating system devised in the colonial era has had long lasting effects in the postcolonial context. Throughout the 20th century, this maintained the hegemonic value of Portuguese associated with modernization and citizenship in dominant discourses despite contestation by divergent groups (Chimbutane, 2011; Firmino, 2001).

3.2. Portuguese, Literacies and Migration

As a significant thread in Portuguese historical texture since early modern times, massive emigration – mostly rural and illiterate – has occurred since the 19th-20th century to Brazil, the USA and Canada, and since mid-20th century to northern Europe. This resulted in continued socio-demographic deficits and the presence of emigration as a sociocultural trope in Portuguese culture (Matozzi, 2015; Ramos, 1988; Baganha, 2001; Malheiros, 2010). Being positioned in the crossroads of the cultural political economies and investments of both 'sending and host societies' in distinct world regions, the Portuguese speaking diaspora is an interesting construct, resulting mostly from informal and non-formal trajectories of people and goods around the world, happening in multiple layers of time. This produced complex multilingual sociolinguistic spaces, where hierarchies, stereotypical versions of nationhood and heritage cross and act in trans-local, sometimes

tense and subversive, identity work[5]. As to writing practice, 1960s and 1970s migrant businesses and associations were meeting points for workers and intellectuals in exile, with significant results for the informal development of literacy among adults (Keating, 2009). Contributions by intellectuals had significant effects in Portuguese cultural, literary and artistic production outside national borders. Yet, arrangements for the transmission of Portuguese language and culture to working class migrants and their children were bound up with nation state pedagogies of what counted as language, culture and literacy needs for Portuguese nationals abroad (see Barradas' detailed account of these discourses and pedagogies in her research in complementary schools of Portuguese children in London, Barradas, 2010). Also to unveil the workings of this cultural hegemony, we need to turn to the historical and discursive negotiations in the mainland.

3.3. Portuguese and Literacies in the Mainland

3.3.1. From Republican Policies to the Estado Novo Regime

Since the 19th century, poverty and illiteracy (of 75% in 1910), were used as topics of mutual blame by political opponents. By strongly criticizing the Monarchy, the Republican educational project provided literacy for all, including adult literacy campaigns, secular state compulsory education from the age of 5, with progressive pedagogies for the instruction of children and adults, the new modern school.[6] Political and economic instability in the country, the financial impact of Portugal's participation in World War I and school desertion made this project fail. Living in mostly rural, isolated and highly differentiated territories, a large percentage of the population lacked the motivation to enter education and saw little purpose in schooling (Carvalho, 1996; Ramos, 1988).

The May 28th 1926 military coup leading to the Estado Novo (1928-1974) illustrates how economic crises led to authoritarian regimes in peripheral southern and eastern European countries. World economy recession increased Portugal's isolationism in Europe and attention was turned to "those territories within the limits of the Nation and Empire" (Fortuna, 1993: 77-78, cited in Teodoro, 2000: 49), increasing control over trade in the colonial territories, administrative, political and economic regulation (e.g. through

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[5] See da Silva's work among Portuguese-Canadian migrants in Toronto, Goldstein on Azorean working women in a Canadian workplace, Koven's narratives among luso-descendants in France (Da Silva, 2012; Goldstein, 1995; Koven, 2007).

[6] For a trajectory of the new school movements throughout the 20th century, cf. Nóvoa *et al.* (2002). For adult literacy, cf. Fragoso *et al.* (2011).

taxation). Education and culture were central in the propaganda used by the new regime to dismantle the previous decade's secular republican system. Usually, one identifies two periods in the Estado Novo – early 30s-40s and post-World War II –, with distinct driving forces operating on Portuguese medium literacy value. Early 30's – 40's policies centralized, regulated, moralized and limited compulsory schooling, teaching qualification and curricula to basic literacy skills. Virtues of simplified education were praised under a nationalist rhetoric founded on religious principles. Widely commented by those tracing this period's educational history, one 1938 National Assembly parliamentary speech excerpt framed reading (and what 'reading does to people') in the discursive tension between *instrução* [instruction], i.e., individual acquisition and access to reading and writing skills, and *educação* [education], i.e., socialization into shared correct moral values:[7]

> Saber ler para fazer a cultura do ódio entre os homens e do ódio entre as classes? Saber ler para poder ver até onde vai a prática e a ciência do mal? Pergunto: vale a pena saber ler para isto? É preciso sobretudo educar […] A educação sem instrução pode ir muito longe, diz alguém, e assim fizeram os discípulos de Cristo. A instrução sem educação pode levar muita vez para o hospital, para a cadeia, para o manicómio. E é realmente verdade (*in* Assembleia Nacional – Diário das Sessões, Diário n.º 176, 25.03.1938, pp. 556-563, *apud* Campos, 2011: 5)

This kind of reasoning allowed for positive associations of *education* to lack of literate skills and *instruction* to lack of moral values. Virtues and good morals of 'illiterates' were praised and the evils of the immoral desire for knowledge by 'literates' highlighted. The 'power of the written word' was confined to the regime's moral politics, with effects that lingered for generations.

Portugal's neutral political position during and after the World War II, along with industrialization led to a period of economic prosperity, "yet without modernization" (Rosas, 1994: 351). First hand participation in the Marshall Plan post-war 1948 joint recovery OEEC program resulted in open market policies in the fields of health, industry, transports and agriculture, in need of 'human capital'.[8] Education was part of a cultural development plan complementing economy, the mid-1960s OECD Regional Mediterranean Project (with Greece, Spain, Turkey and Yugoslavia). There were

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[7] Cf. Campos (2011); Carvalho (1986); Mónica (1977); Nóvoa (1992); Teodoro (2000).
[8] Organization for European Economic Co-operation; later in 1960, Organization for Economic Co--operation and Development (OECD).

conservative, nationalist, colonial and politically isolationist discourses against the subordination of education to economy, yet policy texts stated the need for progressive education, 'faithful to Christian values' (Teodoro, 2000: 54). Compulsory schooling was expanded and higher education institutions implemented in the mainland and the colonies, with significant effects on what counted as literacies and literate selves. In the light of the colonial war overseas, international pressure to recognize 'pacific co-existence' with anti-colonial movements prompted the regime to impose measures to control the "effects of religious movements with international vocation", i.e., protestant missions (Curto, 2013). Gomes' analysis of an Angolan 1950-1963 colonial educational publication illustrates how a 1950s concern with land and property – openly framed by racist biometrical discourses – shifted to a 1960s concern with adapted qualifications of 'black educational actors', evoking the above mentioned moral politics on literacy value, that confined them to the literacy domains of rural community development and avoided 'risks of social disruption' (Gomes, 1996: 158-160).[9]

3.3.2. Carnation Revolution and the Post-revolutionary Period

The 1974 April 25th Carnation Revolution closed the dictatorial regime, followed by an intense post-revolutionary transition to democracy until 1976. Previous social movements of resistance to dictatorship – student, anti-colonial war, among others – now aimed at developing political awareness, with adult literacy (*alfabetização*) as a key element, a unique opportunity to experiment with Paulo Freire's critical pedagogical ideas (Freire and Macedo, 2013 [1987]). Groups and intellectuals, among them catholic women's GRAAL (*The Grail Movement*) and linguists like Lindley Cintra, adapted the Freirian method for European Portuguese, then re-appropriated by many different campaigns[10] (Pintassilgo and Mogarro, 2009; Melo and Benavente, 1978; Stoer and Dale, 1999; Vicente, 1995). Freirian perspectives – including keywords like 'liberation' and 'critical awareness' (*conscientização*) – became a general 'rule of thumb', giving breadth to sometimes discrepant kinds of pedagogical practice and reflexivity (Stoer and Dale, 1999: 80), often in articulation with other forms of action (e.g. the social housing participatory

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[9] Research in 1990s Portuguese intercultural education allows this author to suggest that former assimilationist colonial common sense – based on a 'lusotropicalist' idea that tends to soften the trauma of the colonial encounter – left traces that travelled into official discourses on multiculturalism in 20th century Portugal (Gomes, 1996: 162). We need to cross language and literacy with discursive trajectories of race and religion. For one possible trajectory of race, cf. Araújo and Maeso, 2012.

[10] For a list of publications and literacy movements, cf. Pintassilgo and Mogarro, 2009.

project called SAAL (Serviço Ambulatório de Apoio Local [Local Ambulatory Support Service], cf. Bandeirinha, 2007; Downs, 1986).

The generative potential of 'cultural production' (Freire and Macedo, 2013) was stalled at times, as normative values related to writing and its transmission were reproduced. In 1976, Paulo Freire himself highlighted the transformative energy behind civic participation, yet acknowledged possible patronizing attitudes (Pintassilgo and Mogarro, 2009: 2-6). GRAAL leader Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo (later to become Prime-Minister), mentioned how sometimes pedagogies drifted, either by applying top-down ideological agendas to actual practices, or dissociating critical awareness from experiential knowledge, that legitimized decontextualized theories on sociocultural transformation (Pintasilgo, 1998: 10, cited in Stoer and Dale, 1999: 79). Pintasilgo's premonition on knowledge dissociation will be crucial to understand the following period, as global forces increasingly operated on the value of language and literacy.

This post-revolutionary period involved massive movements of speakers.[11] Yet, there was financial, legal and educational support (including resettlement) for 'emigrant nationals' only, i.e., working class migrants and their associations, now considered part of the "Portuguese communities abroad". It reinforced links with the homeland and acknowledged the role of emigrants' remittances in the Portuguese gross national product (cf. Rocha-Trindade, 1987). Again, official discourses barely acknowledged the formal and informal multilingual literacy resources resulting from these movements: using homeland mother tongue pedagogies, they reproduced the articulation of Portuguese to a symbolic territory spread beyond geographical borders, only this time diasporic.

3.3.3. *European Union and Globalization: From Post-revolutionary* **alfabetização crítica** *to European* **literacia** *[1986-2007]*

1986 Portugal's integration into the European Economic Community marked the end of democratic transition and opened up opportunities of success and movement for Portuguese citizens. In the mid-1990s, transnational population movements intensified from former colonies and also from Eastern Europe, with no historical tradition of language contact. Portugal kept playing the role of a *hub* importing and exporting labour for overlapping institutional structures operating at the same time in the European context

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[11] People with extremely varied multilingual resources can be included here, moving to and from former colonies during their own independence and nation-building processes; also, diasporic populations, returning intellectuals, political and economic elites from the exile, among others.

(Baganha, 2001: 147; Keating and Solovova, 2011: 1252). With new technologies and the internet, other discourses on literacy and linguistic diversity circulated, albeit in separate areas of policy making.

Produced by international agencies, materialized into EU recommendations, then recycled into national legislation, integration policies aimed at modernizing and re-qualifying human resources (cf. Hamilton, 2012). Lifelong training emerged and public life was now *pedagogized* (Lima, 2005: 43-44). Literacy standards were framed by functional ideas on reading, writing and calculation, as measurable information processing competence.[12] A newly coined concept for 'writing' and its 'contexts' emerged – *literacia* (Benavente, 1996: 4) – with impact on the emerging state-funded educational sciences. Beyond learning as decontextualized transmission, progressive literacy-as-*literacia* highlighted how resources were deployed in daily contexts (cf. Kramsch, 2002; Lam and Kramsch, 2003). 'Good readers and writers' were assessed according to a continuum of individual skills ideally defined to meet the demands of 'modern life', allowing statistical correlations designed by discourses of rating and accountability.[13] In the light of the Freirian experience, progressive literacy-as-*literacia* discourses swept away critical literacy-as-*alfabetização* and relegated *alfabetização* to cognitive acquisition of reading and writing skills. Collective memories on 'cultural production', sociocultural understandings on readers/writers/speakers as creative meaning-makers taking on new subjectivities were considered 'ideological', hence unacceptable. Literacy as situated practice was domesticated, with highly regulated understandings of 'context': 'literate citizens' were acquirers, consumers and achievers of skills.[14] The tacit unspoken monolingual principle of Portuguese medium-literacy remained and learners' multilingual repertoires or experience with other writing systems ignored (Macedo, 2000).

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[12] For a critique of integration in adult education and literacy, cf. also Simpson and Whiteside (eds.), 2015.
[13] Cf. Handbook of Household Surveys, Revised Edition, Studies in Methods, Series F, No. 31, United Nations, New York, 1984, at http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=1536; http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=1279; http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/41529765.pdf.
[14] Yet, lifelong training and popular education (with traditions since the 19th century) still digladiate in adult education sectors (cf. Lima and Guimarães, 2004: 51-55). Flexible grassroots pedagogical experiments inspired by Freire reemerge in the 21st century, inspired by world social forum ideas, e.g., ecology, social justice and multicultural epistemic alternatives (Meneses *et al.*, 2007).

Portuguese being an official language in the context of European multilingual policies added prestige to the existing historical, literary and heritage value. With Brazil's resilient economy as one of the BRICS, Portuguese value intensified in global linguistic markets, sustained by transnational political and economic alliances between nation-states with Portuguese as an official language (*Países de Língua Oficial Portuguesa*).[15] Council of Europe discourses (e.g., European Common Framework of Reference for Languages) regulated 'Portuguese as a foreign language', from higher education research and practice to diasporic complementary community based classes.[16] Investment in higher education multiplied language sciences and education research (Ançã, 2007; Bizarro *et al*., 2013; Delgado *et al*., 2000; Dionízio, 2005; Feytor-Pinto, 2008; Flores, 2011; Mateus, 2002; Mateus *et al*., 2005; Pinto, 1998; Pereira, 2006). Heated arguments on linguistic ownership, normativity and authenticity took place in relation to topics such as legitimate language and linguistics research, the orthographic agreement with respect to standardized varieties of Portuguese, basic and secondary curricular grammatical terminology for 'Portuguese as mother tongue'.

Recognition of linguistic diversity in Portugal also resulted from migrant movements from Eastern Europe, from Portuguese as official language nation states, from the existing second generations of Portuguese speakers of migrant origin (Feytor-Pinto, 2008; Solovova, 2014). These speakers became object of European legislation inspired immigration policies framed by the Schengen Treaty, and of governmental humanitarian discourses with European impact on migration and multicultural dialogue.[17] Scattered research projects focusing on bilingual education emerged, primarily related to Cape-Verdean creoles or Slavic languages, legitimizing other grammars and writing systems (Pereira and Duarte, 2011; Pereira, 2010; Solovova, 2014). Liberal European discourses celebrated multilingualism, yet detailed policy textual analyses reveal dominant *lusophone* assimilation discourses, modelled on monolingual nation-state approaches to language in education, confining the state's intervention to linguistic integration via Portuguese-only. Framed by second language acquisition and error analysis approaches (cf. Lado, 1957 and Krashen, 1982, cited in Lam and Kramsch, 2003), speakers of other

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[15] These alliances were assisted by discourses of a Portuguese-speaking world, cf. note 1, also Moita-Lopes, 2015.

[16] Cf. QuaREPE (Quadro de Referência para o Ensino Português no Estrangeiro); Portaria n.º 914/2009, 17th August, cf. http://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/EEstrangeiro/2009_portaria_914.pdf.

[17] E.g. discourses issued by the recently renamed Alto Comissariado para as Migrações [High Commission for Migrations – ACM]. See also note vii.

language varieties were considered passive informants, with narrow scope for opinion, acting in the periphery of schooling. Public educational institutions targeted for Standard European Portuguese, legitimized the 'native' speaker, and confined users of other languages and varieties to separate ethno-cultural domains of community life (Keating, Solovova and Barradas, 2015).

In the first decade of the 21st century, technological restructuring plans for public administration were implemented; institutional practice and everyday life became digital, with inevitable effects on how adults and children related to writing. Global English was now introduced as compulsory modern language since primary school, now framed by more recent changing societal dynamics – such as massive qualified youth emigration and Portugal's position in the European and global financial crisis (PIGS) in pressing need of further research.[18]

4. Literacy (and Language) in Cycles of Time: What's in a Name?

I have followed the circulation of discourses about language and literacy in the recent Portuguese history. Identities related to impoverished illiterate citizens yet monolingual speakers of an imperial language reinforced the idea that Portuguese-medium literacy was one of the major survival strategies of a society that shifted from a colonial empire in the early 20th century to a peripheral southern European nation state. Tracing the junctions of literacy and language discourses produced by both nationalist and international actors also revealed how language diversity has been silenced in these policies. Modelled by late capitalist forces leading to 21st century globalised societies – the essential role of language and communication included – proud discourses on the national and colonial/missionary value of Portuguese articulated with discourses of profit framed by increasingly global markets of Portuguese communicative exchanges (for language as profit and pride, cf. Heller and Duchêne, 2012). The cyclic emergence of two interwoven tropes on the value of literacy (and language) illustrates this shift – one that sees *literacy as decontextualized skills* possessed by individuals, the other proposing a view on *literacy as shared and contextualised practice*.

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[18] Nowadays and for the first time, the OECD based international triennial Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) reveal significant increases in literacy rates and qualifications. The identity aspirations of economic success and social mobility promised by these liberal discourses did not last for long, though. Financial and global crisis in Portugal resulted in unemployment, poverty, and yet again, brain drain and massive emigration, this time of higher qualified youth (cf. Gomes, 2015).

In the first half of the 20th century, inspired by 'mind as a container' views on reading and writing transmission, the idea of *decontextualized literacy* was complemented with a perspective on socializing individuals into (minimal) 'worth' and 'authentic' writing and reading *practices* and *spaces of citizenship*. These discourses were saturated by nationalist moral political constructions of 'submissive and proud' literate citizens, united by language, identity and a colonial territory beyond the mainland, with effects, not only on Portuguese imagined centrality, but also on postcolonial projects founded on the claim for an idea of the nation-state (Ribeiro, 2015; Stroud 2007).

Even though interrupted by a fertile 1970s post-revolutionary social imagination sustained by Freirian literacies and the idea of emancipated, critically aware citizens (*alfabetização crítica*), liberal discourses were introduced in the post-World War II period and later intensified by the 1980s European integration. They dissociated literacy from language, and decontextualized skills from contextualised practice. Computational metaphors of learning as information processing surfaced in education and language research under a newly coined term *literacia*. Official European discourses on multilingualism and investment on research and development increased regulation of the Portuguese language. Speaking, writing and reading were now managed – or *taylorized* (cf. Heller and Duchêne, 2012) – according to global standardized scripts of language production, set up by discourses on learning and competence-building produced by de-localized linguistic and literacy markets, with the corresponding disciplinary technologies of the self. Framed as modern liberal citizens and autonomous entrepreneurs, readers, writers and language users were accountable, both for the individual development and successful deployment of appropriate skills in the spaces of the new economies, as well as for the failure to achieve them, with the corresponding senses of (well or ill) being and feeling.

Over time, both *literacy-as-contextualised practice* and *literacy-as--decontextualized skill* discourses fell into two major conceptual traps. One, they overlooked language's major role in the cultural production of human subjectivity and learning, and as a major resource in literate meaning making activity (Macedo, 2000: 85); two, they foregrounded ideal views of learning – either grounded on internal language acquisition general processing principles or on task-based strategies of socialization of ideal monolingual learners (as producers/consumers) in ideal communicative spaces imagined by globalized new economies. This confirmed Pintasilgo's insight on the dissociation of critical awareness from experiential knowledge. National cultural

lusophone and global European assimilationist discourses combined to disregard local lived embodied experience with multiscalar and multilingual heteroglossic repertoires resulting from movements of speakers inside and outside Europe.

To fully understand the increasingly unequal complexities involved in language and literacy practice in 21st century multilingual contexts with Portuguese, this conundrum needs solutions. I would argue for a *literacy-in-action* approach, based on material, ecological and historical understandings of locality, lived experience and cultural production. Inspired by contemporary sociolinguistic approaches that take language and literacy acting in local practice and being negotiated in activity, (Blommaert, 2008; Barton, 2007; Baynham and Prinsloo, 2009; Hamilton, 2012; Papen, 2012; Pennycook, 2010), it would redeem some of the progressive and creative language and literacy experiences situated in Portuguese history.

Far from ideal, speakers, readers and writers are discursive selves, with historical bodies acting in the material world (Scollon and Scollon, 2004). First, tracing the trajectories of the values of language and literacy as described here, allows us to explain the politics of recognition of speakers, readers and writers with subjectivities positioned by the circulation of literacy and language hegemony and the corresponding discursive regimes of desire. Second, an understanding of speakers, writers and readers' language and literacy biographies allows us to understand how repertoires are negotiated by individuals with embodied personal and collective memories, acting in the crossroads of lived experience, interactional accomplishment and discursive subjectivity (Busch, 2015; Kramsch, 2009; Norton, 2000). Third, a turn to a material understanding of language and literacy activity assumes bodies, artefacts and historicity right from the very start. Highlighting the materiality of the written artifact as a reification of locally situated meaning making activities (Baynham and Prinsloo, 2009; Barton, 2007; Barton and Hamilton, 2005), and following the horizontal trajectories over time and space of the material traces of production and reception of bodies, objects, discourses and textual artefacts, is a helpful way of recognizing the complex and juxtaposed dynamics, historically negotiated by human and non-human actors with differentiated biographies (cf. Brandt and Clinton, 2002; Pahl, 2014; Budach, Kell, and Patrick, 2015).

Insights into *literacy-in-action* dialogue well with learning discourses that bring acquisition and socialization together, as Lam and Kramsch (2003) have put it: we need to "take a broader semiotic view of texts as a combination of many semiotic systems historicized, jointly constructed by many people bound by relations of power and social

roles in a certain place and a certain time, and where language users are described as speaking subjects, i.e., constructed through discourse" (*ibidem*: 5). Best explored from comparative multi-sited linguistic ethnographies in the crossroads of archival research and critical discourse studies, it allows us to make visible the co-habitation of regimes affecting the use of writing in context, and the strategic and contested use of such regimes by situated actors, to avoid epistemic blindness (Blommaert, 2008; Prinsloo, 2011; Santos, 2001).

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