

Linguistic legacies of British and Portuguese (de)colonization in Africa: (un)successful common bonds?¹

Legados linguísticos da (des) colonização britânica e portuguesa em África: laços comuns (mal) bem-sucedidos?

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Resumo

O Reino Unido e Portugal partilham um passado de expansão territorial em África, um continente com uma grande variedade cultural e linguística. As políticas de língua e de educação implementadas durante a colonização e descolonização prevalecem devido à interdependência económica e financeira gerada pela actual situação global. A Commonwealth e a CPLP são também, em parte, responsáveis pela manutenção de relações distintivas com as antigas colónias que levaram à promoção da língua como forma de *soft power*. Este é um estudo comparativo que analisa as esferas linguísticas e culturais Anglófonas e Lusófonas em África. É possível concluir que existe uma lacuna indesejável entre as políticas oficiais e as realidades linguísticas, que só podem ser entendidas através do paradoxo, a característica que melhor define os legados linguísticos do inglês e do português em África.

Palavras-chave: Africa, CPLP, Commonwealth, políticas e realidades linguísticas.

Abstract

The United Kingdom and Portugal share a past of territorial expansion in multilingual Africa, a continent

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with great cultural and linguistic variety. The linguistic and educational policies implemented during colonization and decolonization prevail because of the economic and financial interdependence generated by the present global order. The Commonwealth and the CPLP are also, partly, responsible for sustaining distinctive relationships with former African colonies, which have led to the promotion of language as a form of soft power. This is a comparative study analyzing the Anglo- and the Portuguese cultural and linguistic spheres in Africa. Conclusions reveal an undesirable gap between official policies and linguistic realities, which can only be understood through paradox, the best-defining characteristic of English and Portuguese linguistic legacies in Africa.

Keywords: Africa, CPLP, Commonwealth, linguistic policy and reality.

1. Introduction

The legacies of the British and the Portuguese Empires are still felt today when many African countries have granted official language status to English and Portuguese in post-independence scenarios. In a curious twist of fate, the languages of former colonial powers have become the vehicles for the pursuit of self-determination and the quest for African cultural identities. Simultaneously, they operate as bridges between the various African languages that coincide with the geographic loci of modern African countries.

This is a comparative study focusing on the linguistic situation of two geographic African spheres associated to two major language organizations: the Commonwealth and the CPLP (Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries). Coincidentally Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony, is located at a common interstice linking these two spaces by belonging to both the Commonwealth and the CPLP. This study compares the language policies and realities of countries belonging to these two organizations, which also border one another geographically, and analyzes the perception of how English and Portuguese (still) impact African cultural identities and their quest for autonomy. The issues tackled by our research are of significant importance for the field of African Cultural Studies pertinent to both the Commonwealth and the CPLP as these communities share historical, cultural, political and economic ties.

Taking into consideration the processes of colonization and decolonization of the Portuguese and the British Empires in Africa so as to focus on their long standing linguistic legacies, this study scrutinizes points of convergence and divergence between the Anglo- and the Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) spheres in Africa.

2. A common trajectory

Historically, the United Kingdom and Portugal share a past of territorial expansion on the African continent. This past, which, at its height between 1875 and 1921, came to be known as the age of Empire because imperialism took on a formal, read colonial, form (Hobsbawm, 1987, p.57), can still be felt as a lingering presence in Africa. Indeed, were it not for Empire and English would not be an official language in nineteen African countries and Portuguese in five.

The political/diplomatic relationship between what is now the United Kingdom and Portugal dates back to 1386, when England and Portugal signed the Windsor Treaty, the oldest, still-standing alliance in the world. Because the United Kingdom and Portugal share such a lasting agreement between sovereign states, also known as Anglo-Portuguese Alliance, it can be argued that so, too, the Commonwealth and the CPLP are connected. Portuguese and British interest in Africa predates the period of the Scramble for Africa in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In fact, from the sixteenth century onwards, both countries came to establish vast overseas empires in Africa through political, military and economic means. British and Portuguese cultures and languages (both of Indo-European roots) were diffused and still endure as legacies in on the African continent. Today, the Commonwealth and the CPLP are, partly and respectively, responsible for sustaining, British and Portuguese relationships with Africa in what were once their formal spheres of influence.

Over the centuries, after the first Portuguese navigators circumnavigated and mapped the African coast during the fifteen century, large portions of Africa were either invaded, conquered or annexed by European powers. Some became protectorates, as British Somaliland, others, as Angola, were colonies. Before European arrival, the African continent had no linguistic borders, but after the expansion of the British and the Portuguese Empires by the late nineteenth century, many of their former colonies shared borders that were perpetuated in post-independence. However, these, 'which were drawn in Europe by the colonial powers at the turn of the century, do not pay any regard to the cultural, linguistic or historical affinity of the Africans' (Lodhi, 1993, p.79-80).

When the British and the Portuguese granted independence to their African colonies in the second half of the twentieth century, self-determination came amidst struggle. Despite periods of stress, the ties between colonizers and colonized were not altogether severed. When the struggles for independence subsided, the so-called language

organizations, such as the Commonwealth, L'Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF, or just Francophonie) and later the CPLP became pivotal in the maintenance of cordial relations between former colonizers and colonized. In countries of the Commonwealth that were once British colonies, English has persisted either as an official or semi-official language or it has otherwise retained a special status. For most of the children of African English-speaking territories, this means that English is the language of education, even though it may not be their first language or mother tongue. Similarly, in member-states of the CPLP, once Portuguese African colonies, Portuguese has also retained the status of official language. Formal education is carried out in Portuguese even though students may not speak it at home and only have a first contact with it when they start school, usually at the age of six. An analogous scenario exists in the eighty-eight countries that form the Francophonie, where French is promoted as a language of work and education coexisting with the linguistic and cultural diversity of those countries. Sanches (2014, p.8) states that the Commonwealth, the CPLP and the Francophonie are 'artificial groupings' that bring together countries with a shared history and language which belonged to the previous Portuguese, British and French empires who are 'interested in promoting its language as a source of soft power' (2014, p.5).

The linguistic and educational policies implemented during the processes of colonization and decolonization prevail because of the major economic effects and financial interdependence generated by the present world order. In linguistically diverse African territories, the statuses of English and Portuguese as powerful tools and commodities for going global persist because during the colonial period, African languages were generally not used 'in high-status functions, not even in domains such as secondary and tertiary education' Alexander (2000, p. 6). This may explain why today's students, the future generations of Africans, carry out their education in English or Portuguese which may mean, in the long run, that their national languages will never be duly recognized and the African continent will be forever linguistically dependent on former colonial languages. There is a 'continued dependence on colonial languages' and a situation of 'linguistic imperialism' (Lodhi, 1993, p.81), undermining indigenous languages which are an inestimable cultural resource. According to Cabecinhas and Feijó (2010, p.42), 'we are living in postcolonial times, but colonialism persists in people's minds, shaping personal trajectories and intergroup relations'. Thiong'o (1994, p.16) claims that the true goal of colonialism was control over the colonized peoples' economic and political wealth, but above all control over their minds and 'the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a

people's culture and the conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser'. The author emphasizes that 'the domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised' (1994, p.16).

3. Rushing into Africa and scrambling for it

British expansionism

Historically, Portugal and Spain were the first European nations to start the Age of Discoveries by pioneering sea routes that led them across the Atlantic to the New World and down the African coast to the Indian Ocean. In 1607, the British established their first settlement in North America at Jamestown, the place of birth of the United States. Immigrants from different linguistic backgrounds kept coming in for a myriad of reasons:

the glory of the realm, gains from piracy, founding new utopias, wealth from agriculture and mining, trade, personal glory, a stirring duty to spread the gospel, global strategy, windfall spoils from military victories, even in the end some sense of obligation to educate the native inhabitants (Ostler, 2006, p.478).

The economic success of these newly-founded colonies, depended on bonded labour. In the sixteenth century, the 'Atlantic Triangle' meant that slaves from West Africa were taken to the American colonies and the Caribbean to work in plantations. Communication between slaves and masters was established through Pidgin English, the slave's *lingua franca*, which evolved into Creole English.

Across the Atlantic, England seized the Dutch settlement of Cape Town in 1795 thus beginning its expansionist movement in Africa. English-speaking South Africans had co-existed with the Afrikaner Dutch since the middle of the seventeenth century. In 1822, English was made the language of law and education and the official language of many other aspects of public life in the Cape Colony. Crystal (1995, p.100) explains this new complex linguistic situation:

Afrikaans was perceived by the black majority as the language of authority and repression: English was seen by the white government as the language of protest and self-determination.

Many blacks saw English as a means of achieving an international voice, and uniting themselves with other black communities.

The real colonization of the rest of Africa by European powers took place throughout the nineteenth century, reaching a zenith in the last quarter of the century when the Scramble for Africa was kick-started by the Berlin Conference (1885-1885), which partitioned the continent into spheres of influence and established the clause of effective occupation. Before the century was over, the British took over the ruling of large stretches in Southeast Africa and Western Africa, either by establishing protectorates or colonies. English was one of the tools for conquest, domination and administration. The struggles of indigenous populations and nationalist movements eventually led to independence, but English retained official or semi-official status in virtually all territories, or, as Phillipson put it: ‘the British empire has given way to the empire of English’ (1992, p.1). All in all the British Empire extended to four continents and lasted for more than three hundred years.

Portuguese Empire-building

The Portuguese voyages of discovery began in the 1400s and went as far as South America, Africa and Asia. Opening new maritime routes, the Portuguese soon gained a dominant position in the spice trade and helped Europe to find new markets from where to get raw materials and where to export its manufactured goods. Additional goals were to spread the Catholic faith and ‘civilize’ the natives.

In 1500, the Portuguese reached Brazil, which would become Portugal’s largest colony in terms of both territory and population. The Portuguese imported slaves from Africa and forced them to work in plantations. Throughout the 1500s, Portugal spread its sphere of influence to the African territories that would eventually comprise their former colonies of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. These colonies were at the center of the slave trade to the New World and were a source of gold and diamonds. Cape Verde and Sao Tome and Principe, two archipelagos off the western coast of Africa, were also part of this Portuguese sphere of influence and *de facto* colonies. Unlike the Portuguese, the British in Africa developed an indirect rule in the administration of their colonies and ‘sought not to displace African systems of authority and administration, but rather to rule through them whenever possible’ (Gilbert and Reynolds, 2004, p. 287).

The pan-African independence movements that swept Africa in the 1960s led the

Portuguese colonies to also initiate their struggle for liberation from the metropolis. The Portuguese African colonies gained their freedom in 1975. Since then, many African immigrants have fled the conflicts and civil wars, which have meantime erupted in those countries. Although some of these former colonies have valuable natural resources, most remain poor and politically unstable.

Unarguably, and despite four decades of post-independence, Portugal left in all these countries political, economic, social and, most conspicuously, linguistic legacies. It maintains cordial diplomatic relations with all its former African colonies. Altogether, the Portuguese empire lasted more than six centuries and spread across fifty countries. The Portuguese language is maintained as an important link with these countries, but it also works as a reminder of the oppressor. Namburete (2006, p.63) questions the linguistic identity of so many speakers who live in the so called Lusophone countries, but who do not speak, read or write in Portuguese. Lusophony is not a cultural area but a post-colonial defined space. Even the denomination ‘African countries of Portuguese Expression’ represents the dominant connotation of the Portuguese empire. Cao Ponso⁵ questions how far countries where the colonization process involved a violent imposition of the European language, leaving a lingering imaginary of submission and insufficiency produced during the colonial period, truly feel represented by the term *Lusophony*.

4. Imagined Communities

The Commonwealth of Nations

In the years that followed independence, many territories once part of the sphere of the British Empire kept English as the language of law, government, education and in other sectors of society. These nations, once former colonies of the British Empire, struggled to conciliate mixed, antithetical sentiments in regard to keeping British cultural values and the English language all the while asserting their own feelings of nationalism and independence. The Commonwealth of Nations, born out of the free-will of peoples that were once part of the British Empire to maintain a common bond based on a shared past, meant that the ties uniting Britain and the former colonies were never severed. Its Charter

⁵ “Um foco sobre a situação sociolinguística dos Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa”, in <http://www.revistaicarahy.uff.br/revista/html/numeros/5/dlingua/LETICIA.pdf>, (accessed January 28, 2019).

places great acumen in the fact that the English language lies at the core of the strength of the Commonwealth, acting, simultaneously, as an element of ‘shared inheritance’ (‘The Commonwealth Charter’). Indeed, English is a symbol of Commonwealth heritage and unity, a privileged means of communication within the organization.

Currently, the Commonwealth is composed of 53 countries across Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and the Pacific and the home of 2.2 billion citizens⁶. More strikingly, it includes countries that were never part of the British Empire, such as Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony until its independence in 1975, and Rwanda, a territory under Belgian administration after World War II, which became independent in 1961.

The Community of Portuguese Language-Speaking Countries

According to Cabecinhas and Feijó (2010), after decolonization Portugal did not abandon the historical connection to the Portuguese-speaking countries. The CPLP, which was created in 1997 with the aim of strengthening the bonds between Portugal and its former empire, is an entity ‘with a new political project, based on the Portuguese language’⁷. It is a ‘highly heterogeneous and dispersed geo-linguist community of eight “Lusophone” countries’ (Cabecinhas and Feijó, 2010, p.30), Angola, Brazil, Cape-Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe and East Timor, which share a common-rooted past in language and history. It is this shared cultural identity and mostly the common bond of the Portuguese language that enables the community and the countries it represents to be more globally recognized, as ‘language is one of the assets allowing this organization to increase its international projection and attractiveness’ (Sanches, 2014, p.1). Language is also the ‘key to the effectiveness of soft power’ and ‘how well a country has projected itself’ (Sanches, 2014, p.3). As Eduardo Lourenço (1999) mentions, *Lusophony* is a specific area of intersection with other identities. This vast Portuguese-speaking imaginary linguistic community (Anderson, 1991) was recently enlarged to include Equatorial Guinea, which had to declare Portuguese as an official language as ‘language is the backbone of the CPLP’ (Sanches, 2014, p.4). Upon its creation, Portuguese needed to be presented as a cohesive language. In light of this, the community has tried to implement a common orthography of the Portuguese language

⁶ “About Us”, in <http://thecommonwealth.org>, (accessed September 28, 2019).

⁷ “Histórico: Como surgiu?”, in www.cplp.org, (accessed January 28, 2019).

through the *Acordo Ortográfico da Língua*/ Portuguese Language Orthographic Agreement. This document stipulates common rules for usage and spelling of the Portuguese vocabulary in all its forms whether European, Brazilian, African or Timorese. The ruling has been met with some antagonism and has thus failed to being fully applied.

5. Africa's current linguistic scenario

Africa, a continent with a very significant linguistic variety, has an estimated 1500-2000 languages belonging to four groups, Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan, Niger-Saharan, and Khoisan⁸. Most post-colonial African countries represent multicultural and multilingual environments where many different languages in diverse geographic locations take on multiple roles. The linguistic ‘patch-work’ and the ‘abundance of languages in Africa has meant enormous problems of communication, in education and [...] political stability’ (Lodhi, 1993, p.80). Multilingualism, it has been argued, can be pointed out as a cause slowing down development. Indeed, in the wake of independence, ‘the multilingualism that characterized the majority of those newly independent states came to be perceived negatively by governments as a significant obstacle to achieving national unity and cohesion’ (Frydman, 2011, p.179). Alexander (2000, p.6) believes it was precisely ‘because of the multilingual character of most colonially defined states in Africa and elsewhere and because of the intuitive policies of imperialist powers, [that] the languages of Europe, specifically Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, English and French (on the African continent) became the languages of power’.

Local languages have been considered ‘chaotic, imprecise, lacking in abstractness and not at all real languages, just dialects’ (Stroud, 2002, p.28) whereas the languages of the colonizers are viewed as export commodities used in education because they were cheaper and easier to keep and because linguistic homogenization would mean some degree of national integration, peace, growth and prosperity (Lodhi, 1993, p.82). The implementation of reform strategies has been inconsistent. Some attempts at replacing the former colonial languages have had some success, as is the case of Swahili (Lodhi, 1993, p.80), but generally it may be said that all African countries are characterized by an asymmetrical coexistence of languages or linguistic stratification and that educational

⁸ “Official and Spoken Languages of African Countries”, in http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/african_languages.htm, (accessed January 28, 2019).

policies in most countries do not bear in mind their linguistic realities. Baldauf and Kaplan refer to English and Portuguese as ‘officialized languages’ (2004, p. 9) and state that ‘there is a substantial gap between official policy and linguistic reality’ (2004, p.10). They conclude by stating that language in education policies are many times ‘ad hoc and driven by market forces’ (2004, p.11), dependent on changes in the direction of political agendas, ‘often fragmented and frequently simply ineffective – even wasteful of resources’ (2004, p.11).

English-speaking Africa

English is now considered the global language and said to be spoken by a third of the world’s population (Crystal, 2006, p.5). Authors as Phillipson (1992, 2001, 2003a, 2003b), Pennycook (1994, 1998, 1999), among others, consider the present status of English, a mere continuation of the colonial legacy, or a covert form of linguistic imperialism. For Alexander, two movements go hand in hand: ‘the ever expanding global hegemony of the English language and the apparently inexorable corollary marginalization of local, national and regional languages’ (2000, p.5). In Africa, language has always been a complex issue with the English language being perceived bifidly: a symbol of nationalism, a sign of prestige, a liberating force, though still representing the shadow of the oppressor. In South Africa, for example, ‘English became not just a language of oppression but also a language of liberation’ (Mazrui, 2004, p.32) and of ‘national unity’ (Alexander, 2000, p.7). All Africans should have access to English to become empowered but multilingualism and African languages must be promoted as language policy is linked to underdevelopment, poverty, undemocratic political regimes according to Alexander.

In Africa, there are several indigenous languages, or ‘urban vernaculars’ (Makoni & Pennycook, 2005, p.141), some of which working as *lingua franca* or contact language allowing for communication between different linguistic communities. Overall, English-speaking African countries are characterized by either bilingualism or multilingualism.

Stroud views multilingualism in Africa as a societal resource rather than a hurdle to overcome, adding that it is ‘fast becoming an economic necessity rather than a liability’ (2002, p.38-39). The main objective of language policy is to ‘facilitate communication between different language groups’ (Alexander, 1989, p. 52) and to encourage

multilingualism. However, one of the major challenges to promoting African languages is the negative attitudes of the speakers themselves (Alexander; Hornberger) and ‘the wishes of parents and local community [which] may well not be in favour of using local languages as instructional media’ (Stroud, 2002, p. 8). The defense of national languages in Africa is up against several challenges. The heavy global promotion of English which marginalizes African languages and disempowers its speakers (Alexander; Coulmas; Mazrui; Phillipson; Pennycook); the widespread negative community and classroom attitudes (Alexander; Hornberger; Stroud; Benson; Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir); and parental wish for their children to be taught in English (Tshotsho, 2013, p.43). English has gained territory giving place to a mismatch between multilingual language policies and observed language practices (Frydman, 2011, p.180).

After independence, there was a drive for mother-tongue education but also a need to be able to use international languages. This generally led to a ‘retention of the status quo’ with English, the colonial language, being used in education because it could be seen as the ‘extra-ethnic, and politically neutral language’ (Frydman, 2011, p.183) facilitating communication. Children who were not familiar with English would acquire it by being emerged, or submerged into (Skutnabb-Kangas) the new linguistic environments, ‘artificial’ learning contexts (Owhotu, 2009, p.1).

Language policies vary as some governments, such as that of South Africa, advocate English at secondary and tertiary education but still provide education at early ages in local languages to sustain multilingualism, and others, such as those of Ghana and Namibia, are introducing an English-only policy as of the first year of primary school. Namibia is a multilingual nation with thirteen national languages and a progressive language policy that is not being implemented (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004, p. 72) and where ‘English as the language of instruction has been demonstrated [...] to impede quality teaching and learning, contributing to extremely poor academic performance and high rates of failure, repetition, and wastage among students’ (Frydman, 2011, p.186).

Malawi has English as an official and prestige language alongside Chichewa and Botswana has English as official language and Setswana as national language. Tanzania has English and Kiswahili as official languages and confusing, contradictory, and ambiguous language policies (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004, p. 2). Teachers and learners resort to coping strategies as code-switching, code-mixing and translation between English and Kiswahili, but ‘exams are to be written in English, leading to bad grades, drop outs and repetition, which indicates that it is not a learning problem but a language

problem’(2004, p.67). Code-switching in different African countries has been reported as a strategy used when learners are not familiar with the language of instruction (Saville-Troike; Myers-Scotton; Ndayipfukamiye; Heugh).

South Africa has been a rather linguistically complicated case, due to the imposition of, firstly, Afrikaans, and later English. It is still true that the vast majority of the population speaks one of the 11 official African languages or one of the many unofficial ones. Quantitatively, English is only the fourth most spoken home language and more so in urban areas and amongst the educated, as opposed to the rural areas and the working class. English is, notwithstanding, the *lingua franca*, the language of prestige and power. Although South Africa has a more ‘liberal and progressive language policy’ (Frydman, 2011, p.180), and a clearer one (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004, p. 67), the once colonial language is preferred for widespread national communication, but at the local level, people use their mother tongues (De Kadt, 2005, p.4). This is proving problematic particularly in education because learners take exams in languages other than those in which they are taught and teachers teach in languages they hardly know (De Kadt, 2005, p.4). A curious note is that Portuguese is one of the many spoken languages mentioned in the South African Constitution. In spite of Africa’s multilingualism, communication is accomplished across linguistic boundaries with ease, due to the different roles that languages play. We can state that there are horizontal and vertical relationships between different linguistic codes that allow for the co-existence of multiculturalism.

Portuguese-speaking Africa

Portuguese, a Romance language, is now spoken by approximately 260 million people, ranking sometimes the sixth⁹ and sometimes the eighth¹⁰ most spoken language in the world, depending on the source.

Portuguese-speaking African countries are characterized by bilingualism or multilingualism, with several indigenous languages acting as *lingua franca* or contact language between the different linguistic communities. They have poor living conditions and consequently high levels of illiteracy (Cao Ponso)¹¹. According to Stroud (2002, p.8), ‘Portuguese was made the official and working language of the state, and ideologically

⁹ “Summary by language size” in <https://www.ethnologue.com/>

¹⁰ <http://www.photius.com/rankings/languages2.html>

¹¹ <http://www.revistaicarahy.uff.br/revista/html/numeros/5/dlingua/LETICIA.pdf>

portrayed as a national heritage at the same time as it was taken to represent modernity, order, consensus and a unified nation state. National languages, on the other hand, were associated with tradition, ethnic division, and colonial control'. After independence countries tried to dislodge the colonial language, but there was no efficient replacement, and so Portuguese remained the official language (Frydman, 2011, p.180) and the language of prestige. In most countries, however, only a small percentage of the people speaks it or has it as a mother tongue. In Sao Tome and Principe, 98.9% of the population understands Portuguese, while *Santomé* is the main creole language spoken by 72.4% of the inhabitants. *Kabuverdianu*, a creole, is the most spoken language in Cape Verde, where only at the age of six do the majority of the children have their first contact with Portuguese. In Mozambique, there are forty-three languages. Almost 40% of the population is able to speak Portuguese, but it is the mother tongue of only a scarce 6.5%.

Angola has forty-one national languages, with Portuguese being used as the first language by 30% of the population. Guinea-Bissau has twenty-one local languages and only 11% of the people speak Portuguese (Seibert, 2008)¹², a high status language with few speakers (Benson, 2010, p. 325). Portuguese is more spoken and taught in the urban and better-off areas than in the surrounding and rural areas, creating inequalities in education (Benson, 2005, p. 249).

Although figures vary from country to country, formal education is close to 40% on average. All countries are trying to implement a multilingual education system in Portuguese and in the national languages, but unfortunately there have been many obstacles and the creole languages do not really have an official status and are excluded from the education systems. Levels of failure, retentions and drop-outs in primary education are high and said to be a consequence of language policies and syllabi which do not take into account the reality of multilingualism. Studies have shown that 'children who are taught in their mother tongue do better in school than those who are taught in Portuguese' (Johnsen, 2011). Challenges include the submersion of children in L2 classrooms to sink or swim, mother tongue being even considered a source of shame, decision makers and peasant farmers believing unconditionally in the power of exogenous "official" languages and various misconceptions on the part of parents and teachers (Benson, 2005, p.250). Many authors defend bilingual schooling for these African

¹²Gerhard Seibert. A Situação Linguística no Espaço Lusófono: Contributo para um debate científico. 22/04/2008 Saber Tropical Knowledge, Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical <http://www2.iict.pt/?idc=102&idi=13116> (accessed March 31, 2019).

territories (Benson; Bloch & Alexander; Stroud).

In Guinea-Bissau, teachers must speak only Portuguese in the classroom, a fact that drives many children away from primary school (Benson, 2010, p.325). There is a low literacy rate, education is only compulsory until the 6th grade (age eleven) and most young people cannot pay for education beyond that (Luís Cardador)¹³. According to Johnsen (2011), Mozambican children start school without knowing Portuguese, yet they study all subjects in this language. A significant 300,000 children did not have access to primary education in 2011. Secondary education was only attended by less than 20% of those who completed primary school and the drop-out rates were chronically high. Mozambique lacks a clear policy, realistic funding and good governance (Roberto Luis)¹⁴. Approximately 80% of Mozambicans have no education, the unemployment rate is high, and many find work in South Africa. Mozambique shares its borders with six former British colonies; South Africa and Swaziland to the south, Zimbabwe to the west, and Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania to the north. In addition, the civil war of the 1990s provoked mass emigration to Malawi and Zimbabwe. This is why English, the additional language, is used in cities, particularly in the capital, Maputo, with tourists and businesspersons.

The Angolan government has been trying to reduce illiteracy since 2001 and still not all children have access to primary education. In 2007, some of the national languages were gradually introduced in some provinces. Sao Tome and Principe implemented compulsory education from the age of six in 2003, but it is still far from reaching its goal of universal education. Children live far from schools and teachers still do not receive adequate training and materials. In secondary education, enrolment is low and many students drop-out. The Cape Verdean government wishes to introduce bilingual education, but for the moment it is striving to reach the objective of primary schooling for all (Garcia & Fonseca)¹⁵. As seen, lack of resources to provide education for all by 2015 is common to all Portuguese-speaking African countries.

¹³ Luís Cardador. Educação guineense à procura de uma ‘visão’. *BBC para Africa*. http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/africa/news/story/2009/07/090716_gbeducationmt.shtml (accessed March 31, 2019)

¹⁴ Richard Lee. Youth and Adult Learning and Education in Mozambique in <http://www.osisa.org/open-learning/education/mozambique/youth-and-adult-learning-and-education-mozambique> (accessed March 31, 2019)

¹⁵ <http://www.apdr.pt/congresso/2009/pdf/Premio%20Bartolomeu/237A.pdf>

6. (Un)successful Common Bonds

Whether former British or Portuguese colonies, the majority of the above mentioned African countries have enough natural resources and could figure among the wealthiest nations, but they are generally developing countries with great discrepancies between urban and rural areas. There are many shantytowns with poor security and sanitation. They are frequently stricken by diseases, epidemics and civil wars. The vast majority of the African population is rural and has poor standards of living. Some of these countries share geographical borders and a colonial past with the imposition of religious, cultural and linguistic values. The intention to ‘civilize’ the natives and the use of slavery were common to both British and Portuguese empires, hence the reason for the appearance of so many pidgins and creoles. All African English-speaking and Portuguese-speaking countries are characterized by bilingualism and multilingualism. All past and present language policies have been based on colonial and western assumptions and interests and their minority languages ‘have suffered throughout the course of colonialism, post colonialism and globalization’ (Stroud, 2002, p. 8). Both the Commonwealth and the CPLP are communities born out of the desire to maintain the political, economic and cultural links between the two former European overseas empires and their colonies through, first and foremost, their languages, English and Portuguese. Having English or Portuguese as an official language is no longer a prerequisite for belonging to either community.

Mozambique belongs to the Commonwealth and the CPLP, whereas, on a different sphere, Equatorial Guinea is a member of the CPLP and the OIF. Although English and Portuguese are official languages in African countries, in many of them they are spoken only by a minority. Ironically, English and Portuguese, legacies of the colonial system, are perceived as a unifying factor. All of these countries have a drive for mother-tongue education but see the need for more international projection through the use of the former colonial language. The colonial languages are more used in urban areas, by better-off people (Owhotu, 2009, p.7) and they are many times imposed or preferred by governments, parents and learners (2009, p.7). In several countries, children who are not taught in their first language or mother tongue, reveal high-class repetition and dropout rates (2009, p.5), yet indigenous languages are believed to be ‘less complex and therefore less able to express abstract, referential, and logical thought’ (Stroud, 2002, p.42). On the whole, educational policies are not based on and do not mirror the linguistic reality of

African countries. Mother tongue education and bilingual schooling programs are advocated for all these territories as ‘much more accessible and inclusionary’ (Benson, 2005, p.249). Additive bilingualism as advocated by Alexander and Phillipson could be linguistic and educational way outs for Africa: ‘If the African child’s major learning problem is linguistic, [...] then all the attention of African policy-makers and aid western donors should be devoted to strengthening the African languages as languages of instruction, especially in basic education’ (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004, p.81).

7. Final Remarks

Prior to European colonization, Africa had its own geographical and linguistic borders, a situation which changed dramatically after European meddling in African affairs, most notably after the Scramble for Africa, or ‘rush into Africa’ (Makoni & Pennycook, 2005, p.142) in the late nineteenth century. After independence, in the second half of the twentieth century, similarities remain between the linguistic situation of the former British colonies and the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, but there are also differences as has been stated. The legacies are, firstly, a result of colonization, decolonization, signed treaties, impoverishment and the slave trade. Secondly, and maybe more importantly, these legacies are also a result of the economic and political pressures to learn and use languages with higher status in world ranking. Despite differences in the total amount of speakers of both English and Portuguese in Africa, both languages translate as opportunities for development, access to international markets while also functioning as common languages binding distinct linguistic communities. Nevertheless, both English and Portuguese are not only apprehended positively as it is difficult not to regard them as reminiscences of a colonial past and hindrances to the identitarian struggles of African nations on a postcolonial context.

All of this means that, to improve the educational standards of their populations, African governments face myriad challenges, namely the hegemonic power of English and Portuguese. Individually, some children are learning a high-commodity language (those that manage), but generally, the African education systems are generating a significant amount of failures and class repetitions which, ultimately, mean many children being left without schooling, the only means out of poverty. Fafunwa (1990, p.103) believes the imposed medium of communication is working against the spread of knowledge and

holding back the rapid social and economic development of most in Africa. For the author, there is a link between underdevelopment and the use of a foreign language as English and or Portuguese as official languages in African countries, because knowledge and skills come mostly through these languages. This is a massive impediment to reaching the goal of Education for All (EFA) according to UNESCO (2005) and may be creating 'artificial' learning environments and generating problems of cultural identity for future generations (Owhotu, 2009, p.1). Additionally, it will never mean real independence, although it is a dynamic and pervasive situation: 'if Africa is truly to have independence then policy-makers throughout Africa need to be reminded that it is the masses that ultimately suffer when a language is imposed on them through such policies and practices' (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004, p.81). Makoni (2005, p.149) suggests: 'the battle for independence' is simply not won by opting for vernaculars over English as normally articulated in the decolonization literature'. According to Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir (2004, p.68) 'the choice of a language of instruction in Africa is a political choice [...] that may redistribute power in a global context, as well as within an African country, between the elites and the masses'. They add, 'choosing as the language of instruction an indigenous language, a language people speak, are familiar with and which belongs to their cultural heritage would redistribute power from the privileged to the masses'. Language may empower or marginalize (Stroud, 2002). So long as governments continue to attribute greater value to the stronger languages, weaker languages will not be desirable. On the whole, there is great lack of political will (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir; Alexander; Hornberger; Stroud) and lack of 'decision-making action' (Benson, 2005, p.251) to change the medium of instruction and status of indigenous languages throughout the African continent.

These are countries torn between choosing education in the former colonial language or in their own national languages. Either path leads to barriers. Therefore, paradox may well be the best-defining characteristic of English and Portuguese linguistic legacies in Africa.

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