


The importance of not being "pluricentric". Theory and praxis of the (desired) internationalisation of Portuguese/ *A importância de não ser "pluricêntrico". Teoria e práxis da (desejada) internacionalização do português*

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ABSTRACT

Over the last few years, the concept of pluricentrism in the Portuguese language has become a kind of truism or apodictic truth, that is, something that, apparently, is so obvious that it does not even need to be demonstrated, to the point that its approaches have ended up gaining idealizing and, at times, simplistic contours. Thus, the aim of this work is to reason about the theoretical relevance of the notion of pluricentricity applied to Portuguese, based not only on the concrete "ontological" and (geo)political implications of the term, but also on the current stage of research, and its possible and desirable didactic and practical projections. Therefore, the methodology used here is qualitative, consisting mainly of bibliographic analysis and comments and reflections based on it. As results, we point out the importance of being careful with academic fads, at the same time that we highlight the need for greater development of certain aspects of teaching Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PLE), investing more, for example, in the construction of Portuguese corpora and especially with a view to the profile of the alloglot learner.

KEYWORDS: Portuguese language; Pluricentrism; Internationalisation; Lusophony.

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RESUMO

Ao longo dos últimos anos, o conceito de pluricentrismo da língua portuguesa virou uma espécie de truismo ou de verdade apodítica, isto é, algo que, aparentemente, de tão evidente, sequer precisa ser demonstrado, ao ponto de as abordagens dele terem acabado por ganhar contornos idealizantes e, às vezes, simplistas. Assim, o intuito deste trabalho é raciocinar sobre a própria pertinência teórica da noção de pluricentricidade aplicada ao português, a partir não só das concretas implicações “ontológicas” e (geo)políticas do termo, como também do estágio atual das pesquisas, e das suas possíveis e desejáveis projeções didáticas e práticas. Por conseguinte, a metodologia utilizada aqui é qualitativa, consistindo principalmente na análise bibliográfica e em comentários e reflexões baseados nela. Como resultados, apontamos a importância do cuidado com modismos acadêmicos, ao mesmo tempo em que salientamos a necessidade de um maior desenvolvimento de certos aspectos do ensino de Português Língua Estrangeira (PLE), investindo mais, por exemplo, na construção de corpora do português e tendo em vista sobretudo o perfil do aprendiz aloglota.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Língua Portuguesa; Pluricentrismo; Internacionalização; Lusofonia.

1 Introduction

To begin with, I'd like to offer a few preliminary words about the title of this contribution, as well as some initial thoughts on the subject. In fact, what is the point of a text focusing on the controversial issue of the pluricentrism of the Portuguese language, even more so through the viewpoint of its not less controversial international dimension, which, although depending on the meaning of the term, does not coincide with the pluricentric perspective and even seems to contradict it? ¹

Indeed, if internationalisation and pluricentrism of Portuguese are, at least in theory, mutually interconnected - although not always in a predictable way, since the meaning of the two terms is far from self-explanatory, oscillating between a very basic and, we would say, almost denotative meaning, and a more connotative one, which derives from the aspirations that are concentrated in each of them - what is the advantage of putting one concept into perspective through the other? Is it just the fact that it apparently makes intelligible a label that, despite being fashionable in contemporary scientific debate, continues to have generally reductionist or simplistic applications, ending up assimilating pluricentrism to the internationality of the Portuguese language?

And what are we talking about when we refer to the internationalisation of Portuguese because of its pluricentrism? For example, is Portuguese really an international language because it is, according to the current narrative, pluricentric? Or is it not the case, on the contrary, that the

¹ All the authors are responsible for the ideas, discussions, methodological aspects and results of this work, but sections 2 and 3 are the responsibility of Roberto Mulinacci, while section 4 presents proposals by Davi Albuquerque.

internationalisation of the Portuguese language ends up being hindered precisely because of its supposed pluricentrism, that is, exchanging a simple aspiration for a fact of reality and sacrificing in the name of it the potential for developing its geopolitical status?

These are, after all, some of the questions we would like to try to answer through this article. For now, however, what we can say is that the two themes at issue here, internationalisation and the pluricentrism of Portuguese, have become absolutely central to the scientific literature on this language over the last few years, becoming almost watchwords for any kind of approach to Lusophony², as if it were necessary to recognise them as objective conditions from the outset, and therefore as a premise for any further consideration. But neither of these two categories, sometimes taken synonymously, is really adequate to cover the complexity of the current situation of Portuguese in the world, the first (internationalisation) being just an ambition and the second (pluricentrism) nothing more than a half-truth, even though it is taken as a *de facto* situation.

Moreover, it is in particular the pluricentrism of Portuguese that has become a kind of truism, i.e. something that is so obvious it doesn't even need to be demonstrated, but which nevertheless ends up dramatically conditioning all of our often superficial scientific equations.

Therefore, with a view to a more realistic approach to the contemporary Lusophone world, we intend to start by analysing the two terms mentioned here to see if they really correspond to the image of the Portuguese language that they intend to convey and which, in the wake of the valuable reflection of Silva (2018), one of the scholars who has focused most on the issue of the pluricentrism of Portuguese, are presented in a very dialectical way, with one being practically the opposite of the other, as shown in this excerpt from the aforementioned author:

In this current and prospective context, which standardisation is expected for Portuguese - a pan-Lusophone standardisation of a common, guiding and international cultured supranorm, or a pluricentric standardisation? After a monocentric standardisation in the 16th to 19th centuries with the appearance and flourishing of the first grammars, dictionaries, orthographies and other normative instruments in Portugal, and a bicentric standardisation in the 19th and 20th centuries by Portugal and Brazil, for the typically divergent differentiation of Brazilian and European Portuguese, we expect a pluricentric standardisation in the full linguistic and political sense. A pluricentric codification, not only orthographic, but also lexical and above all grammatical. (...) We need grammars that integrate both the variation within each national standard and the variation between different national standards. Rather than a common panlusophone or international standard codified in grammars and

² It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss aspects relating to the definitions, uses or ideologies of the word 'lusophony'. In 4.1, we only briefly discussed the concept of lusophony from the point of view of Portuguese speakers in the CPLP countries. Thus, throughout this text, 'lusofonia' and 'lusophone' refer either to the Portuguese language or to Portuguese-speaking countries.

dictionaries, we need pluricentric grammars and dictionaries. The construction of these pluricentric instruments does not make it impossible, but rather facilitates the construction of those international instruments. And rather than the pan-Lusophone model that some romantic and rationalist language policies seem to be oriented towards, we need a multilateral policy and management that recognises and promotes Portuguese as a pluricentric language (Silva, 2018, p. 128).

Well, in a nutshell, we have in this passage, although seen from the angle of its standardisation, all the main issues that concern the future of the Portuguese language, precisely because, for now, both pluricentrism and internationalisation are mere aspirations, the feasibility of which ultimately depends on various factors.

2 *Status quaestionis*

In order to shed more light on its presumed international projection, perhaps we should begin by analysing the apparently pluricentric configuration of the Portuguese-speaking community, which is actually, as is well known, based on various linguistic studies and data (Joseph, 1987; Baxter, 1992; Pöll, 2001; Aguiar E Silva, 2007; Oliveira, 2016; Silva, 2018), only bicentric, with Luso-Brazilian bicephalism currently constituting the only possible normative reality of this universe of variation, although the *status of* its two majority and hegemonic varieties, Portuguese and Brazilian, is not at all without problems.

This time, the reason for the questioning is based, in fact, on the non-overlap between European Portuguese (EP) and Brazilian Portuguese (BP) in a number of respects, which concern, for example, both the projection of their norms around the world - the Brazilian one being practically restricted to Brazil³, while European Portuguese continues to be an important reference for the other member states of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) (Oliveira, 2016) - and, above all, the reciprocal relationship of the standards in question within each of these two

³ It's worth remembering that even with the Brazilian government's recent efforts to centralise efforts to disseminate BP, through the creation of the Guimarães Rosa Institute, this doesn't mean that this variety of Portuguese will start to be spoken in the other CPLP countries or in other foreign countries, since the Brazilian reader programme is still small in number (around 40 readers only), It is discontinuous (the readers spend a short period of time, 2 to 4 years, and cannot renew or continue their work), and the other actions are small, with little incentive and budget, thus having little impact and results. These initiatives by the Brazilian government are still few when compared to what has already been done by Portugal, which, on the other hand, has a series of projects, incentives, schools, materials, infrastructures, etc. benefiting both the learner communities and the work and career of the PLE teacher.

national spaces, since in Brazil the written language is still guided, although much less than before, by the Lusitanian standard, but not the other way round.

In short, this can be seen as a patent asymmetry, which, at least partially contradicting Clyne's (1992b) assertion - when, in a pioneering text on pluricentric languages, he spoke of the conditions for the development of a symmetrical pluricentricism in Portuguese -, had already been outlined in that same volume by Baxter (1992, p. 35), who had also added other characteristics, from the massive exposure of BP in all Portuguese-speaking countries, including Portugal, to the distance between the real linguistic uses of Brazilians and the grammatical standard considered normative there. Two situations which, as is well known, have no correspondence in EP⁴.

However, if bicentrism today represents the opportune ontological re-dimensioning of the notion of Portuguese as a supposedly pluricentric language, it is worth remembering, however, that the idea of its pluricentricity has not disappeared from this horizon of studies, but rather represents the new, longed-for political frontier of a common and shared management of this language. Nevertheless, such a meaning of the term "pluricentric" implies two sets of problems: the first is whether the conditions for a pluricentric development of the Portuguese language really exist; the second is what the presence of instances of pluricentric codification, which are expected and desired by many, would mean in terms of linguistic standardisation, if no one explains how they should come about.

In fact, despite the increasingly in-depth reflection that is being produced internationally around pluricentric languages (just think of the series of volumes organised by Rudolf Muhr and other scholars, in which Portuguese and Brazilian colleagues participated), we sometimes have the impression that the label "pluricentricism", in some of its contexts of academic application (Batoréo, 2016; Duarte, 2019), is mainly used as a generic concept to refer only to the pluricontinental geography of Portuguese, without considering the contributions of this theoretical tool, which is based precisely on the meaning of "centre", on which, after all, the legitimacy of many of the arguments woven around the pluricentricity of the Portuguese language depends and which, on the contrary, none of the specialists who have addressed the topic so far have been interested in defining more precisely.

⁴ Firstly, it's worth pointing out that it's remarkable that Baxter (1992) realised this phenomenon years in advance. We'll come back to this later, in section 4, but let's just say that in recent years this scenario has intensified, with different degrees and types of influence from BP on EP and Portuguese spoken in Africa.

But what is, then, a centre from the perspective of the sociology of language, taking as a guiding element the definition of "pluricentric language" given by Clyne (1992a, p. 1), which speaks precisely of "several interacting centres, each presenting its own national variety with at least some of its own (codified) norms"? While this definition excludes any hypothesis of a Lusophony that could really be considered as a plurality of linguistic centres - each of which is simply identifiable by its belonging to the different national geographies of this group of countries, rather than as a place endowed with an autonomous standardising force - it does not, however, suffice to elucidate the question of the heterogeneity of the centres that hide under that apparently common term.

In other words, if the development and establishment of a national linguistic standard, which is the primary function associated in this case with the concept of 'centre', drastically reduces the extent of the Portuguese-speaking countries to which it can be applied - with the exception of precisely the two canonical centres, Portugal and Brazil -, it remains to be seen what is the effective 'intensional'⁵ classification of them from the point of view of the current process of standardising Portuguese and, furthermore, what aspects of the 'intension' of the same concept can be used to distinguish the other non-centres of the set in question, also in order to reflect on the possibilities that each of them has in the future to eventually stop being so much a depository of another's standard and become, on the contrary, an autonomous standardising centre.

To this end, in addition to (and before) making use of the numerous general taxonomic parameters indicated by Muhr (2016) and capable of providing a broadly comprehensive and detailed view of "external" or "first level" Lusophone pluricentrism, we also intend to resort to the fundamental aid of the typology of the German sociolinguist Ammon (1989, p. 89-90). 89-90), which was constructed to account for the *kind and degree* of standardisation of every language and which, following Stewart (1968), is preliminarily based on the dichotomy between 'endonormativity' and 'exonormativity', that is, between a type of standardisation that is more or less endogenous or more or less exogenous, depending on the presence of models (model speakers and authors) and codes (dictionaries, grammars), whose autochthony is distributed along a descending scale with five degrees:

⁵ The adjective "intensional" (with s) derives from its nominal base "intension" (always with s), which refers to the field of semantics and philosophy of language, indicating the pertinent characteristics or traits that make it possible to establish which objects can be included in a given set.

1. Complete endonormativity: the models and the codes are completely internal to the Centre (C) (here 'centre' is understood to mean the country of the language in use);
2. Predominant endonormativity: the codes originate entirely within the C, but the models come partly from outside C;
3. Semi-endonormativity: the codes and models are partly internal and partly external to C;
4. Exonormativity predominates: the codes has a completely external origin, but the models come partly from within C;
5. Complete exonormativity: the models and codes are of completely external origin to C.

It's worth noting that exactly on the basis of this scale, Ammon also establishes a ranking of the centres of standardisation, which, however, only consists of four and not five levels, given that the highest degree of exonormativity automatically removes any theoretical and operational reason for the existence of the totally subordinate centre(s):

1. Complete centre (or a full centre): totally endonormative;
2. Almost full centre: predominantly endonormative;
3. Semi-centre: semi-endonormative;
4. Rudimentary centre: predominantly exonormative .

Well, if we apply the criteria listed above to the context of the CPLP nation states, the picture that emerges from the ideal pluricentrism of the Portuguese language could be as follows:

1. A full centre, Portugal, with entirely indigenous codes and models;
2. An almost complete centre, Brazil, whose models are now entirely national, while its codes are at least partially influenced by the linguistic legacy of the former metropolis. In this case, we're thinking in particular of grammars, which, more than dictionaries, give the impression that they haven't always managed to completely free themselves from all Lusitanian normative marks. This can be seen, for example, even amid laudable exceptions, in the grammar of the 21st century, from Bechara to Hauy (Faraco; Vieira, 2016);
3. A semi-centre, Mozambique, where the models and especially the codes, despite the considerable volume of studies on this variety, have been confirmed in recent years as being quite exogenous, precisely in the direction of that European variety which is considered the only reference for school teaching, although, according to

Gonçalves (2010), it coexists with the progressive emergence of Mozambican Portuguese "described as a lectal continuum made up of a gradation from acrolect through mesolect to basilect" (Chimbutane, 2018, p. 103);

4. A rudimentary centre, Angola, that is, a predominantly exonormative centre to which Portugal continues to provide all the prescriptive codes to be adopted in the classroom (Bernardo, 2017, p. 49), although the models, mainly literary, are taken, at least in a small part and with all the limits of the case (Gonçalves, 2013, p. 162; Hagemeyer, 2016, p. 49), from the national cultural environment.

As a result, it really doesn't make any sense, based on this objective technical parameter, to keep repeating the old cliché that Portuguese is a pluricentric language spoken by two hundred and forty or fifty or seventy (depending on estimates) million people in ten countries, because this very basic information tells us practically nothing about the profoundly heterogeneous nature of each of those sociolinguistic contexts where, apart from the identical official status that this language enjoys, the centres that should guarantee the authentic pluricentricity of Portuguese have characteristics that are not always compatible with this role.

Let's just think not only about the abysmal distance between the only two effectively recognised Lusophone centres, namely Portugal and Brazil, whose models and codes are - in one case fully and in the other almost fully - endonormative, and the other non-centres of the CPLP, all of which are, on the contrary, exonormative in this respect: it is clear, then, that this disproves the basic conceptual core on which the entire theoretical sustainability of the pluricentricity of the Portuguese language rests (it is, in fact, obvious that if the supposed centres of Lusophony are not all true centres, with the exception of two, pluricentricity ceases to exist and we can speak, at most, of a bicentricity), as well as the equally significant internal differences that rank the members of these two macro-blocks (centres vs. non-centres), because it's evident that, on the one hand, the two centres of Portugal and Brazil are not totally equivalent in terms of endonormativity (Portugal is more endonormative than Brazil), just as, on the other hand, not all of the African Portuguese-speaking countries (PALOP) and East Timor have the same degree of exonormativity, with Mozambique, for example, being much less dependent on models and codes produced elsewhere than Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau or East Timor.

In other words, these countries do not yet have national norms for Portuguese, i.e. as standardised objects. These norms may never emerge in the future, for various reasons, including economic and cultural convenience (the limited size of internal language markets and the lack of

prestige of local variants compared to the standard norm). In addition, we think it is problematic to define certain peculiar characteristics of the Portuguese spoken in Africa and Asia as proof of the existence of true vernacular varieties of this language, since this would imply a kind of equation between what are no more than "interlingual varieties of L2 Portuguese" (Gonçalves; Hagemeijer, 2015). This equation would be the result of the influence or interference of the other mother tongues present in those multilingual contexts and effective local standards of Portuguese, which are already widely shared and in the process of being codified.

But let's be clear about this: we are not in the least denying that interesting changes are underway in African and Asian Portuguese, nor that they are not always attributable to the processes of acquiring/learning Portuguese as an L2 or to the typical situations of languages in contact (Alexandre; Gonçalves, 2016; Alexandre, 2018). Indeed, we fully recognise the great merit of the scholars who have provided us with this valuable wealth of data. However, unlike some of these authors, we are less certain about the possibility that the phenomena described are indications of varieties in formation or even in the process of stabilisation, since it would presuppose a goal which, on the contrary, is independent of their pure and simple linguistic evolution, also involving political measures which are deeply inherent to their planning of *status* and, above all, of *corpus* and which, therefore, seem undoubtedly more difficult to predict.

It's worth remembering that, of course, we don't ignore the fact that certain circumstances, such as "segregation" (Prada, 2010, p. 195) - i.e. the partial geographical and social isolation of a country, a situation that is certainly not unfamiliar to Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe and East Timor, preventing those populations from being exposed to competing linguistic models - can favour the consolidation of national standards, which sometimes also serve as a support for the identity self-recognition of those societies.

Anyway, the question here is different: is there a real political will, as well as economic and cultural convenience, on the part of these so-called new Lusophone modelling centres, to become independent from the European standard of Portuguese? From what is shown in the scientific literature on the subject, I would say no, bearing in mind that the main obstacles to the autonomisation of these Lusophone varieties are also of a practical nature, among which we highlight: the near absence of adequate language policies, the implementation of which would exceed the availability of government financial resources (Silva; Sampa, 2017; Araujo, 2020; Santiago; Agostinho 2020); the limited size of internal language markets, which would make the production of indigenous teaching materials and normative compendia costly, not just unprofitable

(Araujo, 2020); the lack of prestige of national varieties compared to the standard EP norm, which, on the contrary, continues to be valued as a means of internationalisation, a form of cultural distinction (Alexandre; Gonçalves, 2018; Silva; Sampa, 2017; Santiago; Agostinho, 2020) and, eventually, also as a means "of socioeconomic advancement" (Brandão, 2011, p. 174).

Not to mention that even though it is always problematic to empirically establish the quantity and quality of the variants that could legitimise the individualisation of a language variety, whether dominant or not, in any case, the construction of it would imply the selection of a norm, which is not only limited to the choice of register (as a rule, the cultured one), but also, and above all, the type of phenomena that deserve to be recorded in order for that norm to become a reference for its speakers.

3 Questions in search of answers

So, given everything we've said in the previous section, is it a realistic goal to invoke a pluricentric management of Portuguese, with a view, for example, to producing grammars and dictionaries capable of integrating, in the aforementioned words by Silva (2018, p. 128), "both the variation within each national standard and the variation between different national standards"? To put it another way, when the models and codes are totally exonormative, as in the majority of PALOPs, whose standards are almost entirely taken from the European standard, what is the effective contribution of these non-centres in terms of authentically shared linguistic standardisation? And, even if we accept the possibility of reaching a phase of "endonormative stabilisation" and "differentiation" (Schneider, 2003) of each of the Lusophone varieties, leading centrifugally to their autonomy, in what sense could we say that this pluricentric standardisation does not prevent or even facilitate the internationalisation of the Portuguese language, given that, far from consisting of a plurality of national standards, an international language should, in the end, be based above all on a standard that is as convergent as possible between them?

On this point, in order to avoid any misunderstandings, it should be said straight away that none of us are naïve enough to dream of a "pan-Portuguese codification of a *supranational* cultured norm" (emphasis in original) (Silva, 2020, p. 694)⁶, designed for an undue and unnecessary homogenisation of the legitimate variants (of pronunciation, lexicon, syntax, pragmatics, etc.) of

⁶ "(...) pan-Lusophone codification of a *supranational* educated norm (...)" (our translation).

Portuguese spoken by native speakers from different Portuguese-speaking countries. Differently said, we are not proposing any artificial convergence of the way Portuguese is spoken by those who already have it as their mother tongue. Nevertheless, we are suggesting it exclusively - as is intrinsically and almost ontologically appropriate for a language labelled as “international” - for those who wish to learn it as a foreign language, and therefore have no obligation to follow, during all their communicative interactions in this new language, a set of supposedly equivalent forms, which are, in fact, alternative forms, not only on the basis of diaphasic or diastratic criteria, but also mainly of diatopic criteria.

Furthermore, although from a scientific point of view it is perfectly legitimate to discretise the current picture of the Lusosphere as best as possible⁷, distinguishing, according to the academic fashion of the day, between dominant and non-dominant varieties (Muhr, 2012), doesn't the excessive semantic scope of these two labels run the risk of invalidating their meaning, to the point of making them epistemologically inconsistent? If, in fact, everything that isn't a dominant variety of a language automatically ends up being a non-dominant variety, without any chance of intermediate classification, does this macro-categorisation really help our understanding of other existing phenomena? So, apart from the fact that the concept of pluricentrism can legitimately be applied even to languages that only have two varieties (like Italian, for example), if we think operationally about this desired pluricentric standardisation of Portuguese (with which, needless to say, in theory, we completely agree), how, after all, should it differ from the bicentric standardisation we already have, since the truly significant deviations from a common grammatical standard are, for the time being, only those coming from Portugal and Brazil?

Hence, alongside this Luso-Brazilian pluricentrism which already exists *in re* (whose unlimited expansion, beyond the possible future emergence of a Mozambican standard, may not be worth betting on, as it is not very functional, not to say even counterproductive to the various interests of the Lusophone-speaking community), is it not preferable to invest in an international standard that is deliberately reserved for foreign learners and is therefore sufficiently denationalised (although without being artificial) to become an instrument for the effective internationalisation of Portuguese?

⁷ We understand and likewise use the term 'lusosphere' as a kind of cast of the English “Anglosphere”, a term that comes from the field of geopolitics and refers to the sphere of influence of a country and a language-culture over others.

4 From praxis to praxis and vice versa

In view of the questions we have asked, some of which suggest some answers and imply certain positions, others of which have yet to be resolved - requiring further reflection and/or research in order to reach future solutions - we consider it important to also discuss the practical characteristics related to the pluricentrism and internationalisation of Portuguese.

In order to make this discussion clearer, our presentation here is organised from the micro to the macro level or, we could say, bottom-up, as we start from the individual practices of Lusophone speakers until we reach the actions proposed by supranational entities, mainly the International Portuguese Language Institute (IILP) and the CPLP.

4.1 About the speakers

If we think firstly at the level of the native Portuguese speaker, since we will discuss L2 Portuguese speakers and the teaching of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (henceforth PLE) later, it is conspicuous that studies on linguistic beliefs and attitudes about the use of Portuguese in the multilingual countries of the CPLP or the different varieties of Portuguese are still limited and what we can say here is based on our observation. What we initially realised is that the concept of 'Lusophony' and its relevance are practically non-existent in the daily lives of Lusophone citizens for a number of reasons, since in most national scenarios, Lusophony is not an everyday topic, nor is it taught or valued in schools. This is coupled with the economic situation of most of the Lusophone countries and their respective geographical distances, which reduces the transit of people in these countries, which only happens within the specific scope of political, academic, commercial agreements, etc., with particular cases of migration being very small. The same can be said of the more affluent classes. The scenario mentioned here does not change, as the PALOP and East Timor are hardly ever considered as top choices, on a private or micro level, in the tourism, education, academic, commercial and industrial sectors, among others. Here again, we see the predominance of Portugal and Brazil, which host and/or are the targets of various types of agreements, projects, cooperation, reception, migration, etc. It is worth noting that, in recent decades, we have seen an increase in the prestige of BP and its linguistic influence in other Portuguese-speaking countries, mainly due to cultural goods and technological means of dissemination (e.g. Brazilian music - radio; Brazilian films and soap operas - television; varied

digital content and Brazilian digital influencers - internet). Furthermore, the linguistic beliefs and attitudes of Portuguese speakers, although sometimes complex and contradictory (depending on various psychological, socio-economic and situational factors)⁸, sometimes simplistic (reduced to a romantic or rationalist stance), tend to value the EP norm as a source of various prestige, such as high education, wealth, elitism and social ascension⁹.

4.2 About teaching

When it comes to education, the situation becomes even more complicated since, again with the exception of Portugal and Brazil, the language and education policies in the other Portuguese-speaking countries, as well as the education system, present a series of problems and challenges that depend on aid and cooperation projects from international organisations (governments of other countries, NGOs, universities, companies) and supra-national organisations (UN, UNESCO, World Bank) to offer some kind of support.

All of this concerns only the Lusophone educational scenario, which we can situate in a status of teaching Portuguese as a mother tongue or as a second language. However, when it comes to teaching Portuguese as a foreign language, i.e. in non-Portuguese-speaking countries that are interested in learning the Portuguese language, we encounter even more adversities. We start with the basic questions themselves, which, when we talk about teaching Portuguese to foreigners, essentially boil down to the following: what should we teach? How should we teach? And also: who should we teach? Most of the time, the first question is answered immediately with the teacher citing their variety of Portuguese as the answer. In other words, Portuguese teachers want to teach EP, while Brazilians want to teach BP. This ends up generating a certain rivalry,

⁸ This complexity and contradiction is revealed in certain studies, such as those by Cao Ponso (2014) and Langa (2019), for Mozambique, and Albuquerque (2022), for East Timor, in which the same speakers sometimes exalt and valorise the Portuguese language, but at other times present a neutral or indifferent stance towards it, also seeking to honour some national language.

⁹ Studies on linguistic attitudes and perception of accent in the Portuguese-speaking world reveal that prejudiced views still persist when it comes to the prestige varieties of Portuguese, held by the majority of Portuguese speakers, who seek to benefit users of the European norm, even non-native ones (Brazilians, Africans from different countries), while those who seek to maintain, as a kind of resistance and maintenance of their cultural identity, some kind of accent of a local variety of Portuguese, end up suffering discrimination and having reduced opportunities in society (Gama, 2018; Souza, 2014). It's worth mentioning that more recent studies, carried out in Portugal (Merçon, 2022) and Brazil (Santos; Rosa, 2022), only reinforce the previous results, pointing out that linguistic prejudices in relation to accents/different varieties of Portuguese negatively affect the speaker's life, as in a selection process for a job vacancy in Brazil (Santos; Rosa, 2022), or to rent a property in Portugal (Merçon, 2022).

putting institutions and learners interested in Portuguese in an uncomfortable situation, as they are, in a way, forced to choose only one variety beforehand (the teacher's), thus excluding the possibility of any interaction with the other, unless greater investments and efforts are made to make both varieties available, PE and PB, as well as to create conditions for them to 'live together' on foreign soil. This implies, after all, that an institution (course, department, faculty) has to hire more professionals, offer more subjects, produce and use more materials, etc.¹⁰.

There are also those who think that teaching a 'pluricentric Portuguese', or a 'pluricentric teaching' of Portuguese, is the solution to this clash of varieties, a kind of third way. Such a stance, however, could be even worse, as it would end up bringing some confusion or simply an unknown to the complex equation of the internationalisation of Portuguese as a foreign language. We know that there are several PLE textbooks that briefly cover other varieties of Portuguese, but this is not characterised as pluricentrism, and such content should be taught with a certain amount of care by the teacher, especially with regard to receptive competence, depending on the profile of the learners. This is because, as we discussed in the previous sections, if we can't delimit the dimension of the pluricentrism of Portuguese, nor can we document the global and local characteristics, how can we talk about teaching them, developing didactic materials or teaching methodologies? We can go on to ask what a pluricentric Portuguese teaching or a pluricentric teaching of Portuguese would be? Unfortunately, in the current state of theoretical reflections, research on the subject and educational practices, we still don't have any answers to this question.

So, far from wanting to polemicise or criticise, in an unfounded way, the praiseworthy work of colleagues who work in teaching and developing teaching materials for PLE, because we know the difficulties of these activities and the need for such publications, when we analyse existing materials that call themselves, in some way, "pluricentric", we don't perceive there all the complexity of the concept of pluricentrism, but only its somewhat reductionist or generalist versions, which often just scratch the surface of the problem. In practice, according to these conceptions, being pluricentric is limited to: comparing EP with BP; randomly listing variations and/or differences in pronunciation and vocabulary between some Lusophone countries; or pointing out cultural, historical, behavioural, ideological aspects and curiosities within Lusophony. In view of what has

¹⁰ This doesn't mean that today's PLE professionals aren't capable of teaching different varieties of Portuguese and their cultural aspects. On the contrary, many of these teachers are trained and capable of doing so, but what we do see is an ideology among certain teachers that is marked by rivalry between Brazil and Portugal, thus refusing to teach the variety of the Other, as well as some institutions that reproduce linguistic myths, considering that the best teacher of a particular language/variety is only the native speaker.

been said about the theory of pluricentrism, how can such materials and conceptions contribute to the situation of pluricentrism, Lusophony or their respective research? Unfortunately, in our opinion, the contribution is sometimes almost nil. Another negative point about these publications is that they are premature, because if there is no pluricentric grammar, international Portuguese or a supra-national norm of the Portuguese language for teaching foreigners, what norm were these materials written and based on? And when addressing the different varieties, which national standard was used (which BP standard? Which standard, if any, from Angola, Mozambique, etc.)? It's clear that these works were written in the native norm of their authors and the examples of other norms are taken from specific linguistic studies which, in turn, documented a specific speech community, i.e. we can't talk about other norms, but only cut-outs of an object, which means that in these works, in other words, we can't talk about other norms, but only cut-outs of an object, which means that in such works we only have the presence of one norm, albeit with a few examples of varieties of Portuguese spoken in other countries, a kind of patchwork quilt, which is why we think it's important to be cautious when approaching such content and, likewise, when it comes to receptive competence as a solution to dialectal intercomprehension for the PLE learner.

Finally, one last point in relation to teaching concerns the teacher, always bearing in mind, from the planning and language policies for each country, who they are teaching, the profile of the class and the learner. If we go back to the previous point about materials, it is up to the professional to ask themselves to what extent it is good for the development of the language skills and competences of foreign learners of Portuguese to talk about norms, varieties and variation? Will this help or hinder the learner? According to our experience and practice, we say that this contributes little, and may even harm, the learning process of the foreign student, who will be faced with a range of linguistic data and information that is of interest only to specialists or advanced students who wish to deepen their knowledge of Portuguese or continue their studies at postgraduate level. Mulinacci (2016) summarises this well in the following passage:

(...) it is no less likely that there is also a significant number of this group who have little or no interest in integrating themselves into one of the two target cultures of the Lusosphere and wish only to acquire a command of Portuguese that will enable them to travel around the CPLP states, do business there, communicate with the resident populations or simply get in touch with other international users of this language. In short, lusophone speakers who are substantially indifferent, for example, to the issues of linguistic neo-colonialism raised by the notion of Lusophony or who are not properly aware of the intercultural aspects that affect language learning or the problems of

comprehension linked to the main axes of variation in the language (...) (Mulinacci, 2016, p. 121)¹¹.

4.3 On language policies

In relation to the norms and centres of Portuguese, as already explained, there are two predominant norms in Lusophony: the Brazilian norm, which is more limited to Brazilian territory, and the Portuguese norm, which is present in Portugal and is taught in a dominant way in the other Lusophone countries. However, the linguistic reality is always more complex than what is described in scientific clippings, which is why it requires constant investigation and updating of research in search of new knowledge. We say this because studies, such as Silva's (2018), confirm the fact that BP is increasingly differentiating itself, moving away from EP, but at the same time, there are investigations that point to the approximation of BP to different African varieties of Portuguese, even mentioning a continuum in the Atlantic, between Brazilian and African Portuguese (Petter, 2009, 2015; López; Gonçalves; Avelar, 2018; Oliveira; Araújo, 2019). We can also mention the more current scenario, in which BP is having a marked influence on Portuguese children, who are 'speaking like Brazilians' (Estadão Conteúdo, 2021), according to various reports that have addressed the subject in recent years, such as Silva (2021). This phenomenon is another that requires investigation, since it is not yet known what the exact influence of BP on EP is, what the real causes are and whether this will remain in the linguistic development of these children¹². These are just a few cases of how complex the Lusophone scenario is, and when it comes to language centres, norms or models, we still have little knowledge about them, and this knowledge is not

¹¹ We are aware that, on this topic, in the few publications that exist, the majority of authors advocate 'pluricentrism' and teaching the different varieties of Portuguese to learners at all levels, but we have identified the need, once again, for a greater number of investigations, as well as the presentation of more data and solid arguments, since we perceive more personal desire than scientific basis. Notable examples of linguistic and empirical studies on the subject include Döll (2001), who argues in favour of teaching specific features of BP or EP according to the degree of complexity, but with an emphasis on the advanced learner, or Svobodová (2016), who, in a different way, points out that foreign students have particular reasons for learning Portuguese, as well as having a preference for a specific variety, in the case of the research carried out in the Czech Republic, EP.

¹² As just one example of Brazilian linguistic and cultural influence in Portugal, there is the study by Lepetri (2018), in which he analyses this influence since the 1940s, starting with music and spreading via the radio. In recent decades, we've seen another, this time via cinema and television, mainly telenovelas from Brazil. Finally, in recent years, several factors are pointed out in the reports cited as causing the recent influences, among them: the large Brazilian migration to Portugal, the problems of social isolation during the pandemic, the dominance of BP in internet content (texts, videos, streaming, posts, memes, etc.) and the technological/virtual dependence of the younger generation. However, we take a less sensationalist view, in which we consider research on this topic to be important in order to issue a scientifically based opinion and not alarmist beliefs or prejudiced attitudes.

static¹³. So what we're emphasising here is the urgency of research into the linguistic situation of Portuguese in the different areas of Lusophony, together with sociolinguistic phenomena and applied linguistics, along with comparative studies between the varieties, so that we can have more solid data to enrich the debate on the pluricentricity of Portuguese and, in the future, consider the possibility of talking about a pluricentric grammar of Portuguese or the creation of a supranational standard, this time, however, on a scientific and didactic basis.

Finally, at the macro level, the level of language policies for the promotion and international diffusion of Portuguese, we still face several problems as well. Among the CPLP member states, once again, only Portugal and Brazil invest in actions for the internationalisation of Portuguese, both in the economic, commercial, diplomatic, cultural, scientific and technological sectors, and in the teaching of Portuguese as a foreign language. In terms of teaching Portuguese, Portugal stands out for having a clear, objective, continuous and centralised policy, with greater investment, specialised bodies (mainly Camões, I.P.) and a large number of schools, centres, departments and professionals spread around the world. In contrast, Brazil, which should be the pioneer country in the promotion and international dissemination of Portuguese, as the largest Lusophone country today, still doesn't have a well-defined policy, marked by discontinuities and generalisations, as well as a small number of programmes and actions (among them: the Brazilian *leitorado* and the Guimarães Rosa Institute), investments and professionals (Carvalho; Schlatter, 2011; Schoffen; Martins, 2016)¹⁴. In addition, there are some exceptions, albeit few, such as a series of initiatives carried out by Angola with the CPLP, according to the Praia Action Plan (CPLP, 2021); the cooperation agreements between Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and East Timor (Sá, 2021); and IILP actions at its headquarters in Praia, which is supported by the CPLP, especially Cape Verde. And the supranational entities dedicated to Lusophony are the IILP and the CPLP, whose main documents, plans and practices can be found in the action plans, published every three years, the latest being the aforementioned Praia Action Plan (CPLP, 2021). However, according to an analysis

¹³ In addition, another area of research that is still unexplored in Lusophony is that of linguistic perception, whether descriptive or sociolinguistic, since it can be seen in interactions in the Portuguese language that speakers of the European norm (Portuguese or Africans) find it easier to understand BP and different accents, while BP speakers (Brazilians) find it difficult to understand EP and the accents of other Lusophone speakers. We bring this information up here just to reiterate the complexity of the Lusophone scenario, but we can say little more about it due to the aforementioned scarcity of research.

¹⁴ As the Guimarães Rosa Institute came into being in 2022, we cannot yet assess its impact on the internationalisation of the Portuguese language, and there are few publications that mention anything about this new Brazilian government body, such as Faraco (2023). However, we can say one thing: if the previous structure, regulations and funding remain the same or similar, this institute will make no contribution whatsoever, it will just be a name change, with Brazil continuing to play a supporting role in the promotion of Portuguese.

of this document recently carried out by Delfino, Boganika and Albuquerque (2023), the authors showed that the actions listed for the promotion of Portuguese are general, without the presence of agents, or details about their respective implementation, nor methods for verifying and evaluating how or if they have been put into practice. Furthermore, the action plans say little or nothing about which actions from previous plans have been carried out or not, as well as whether they have had an impact or positive results. The IILP, on the other hand, has been presenting smaller but concrete and significant actions, such as the launch of the Portal do Professor de Português Língua Estrangeira (PPPLE), which presents teaching materials and is written in the different varieties of Portuguese by various teachers (Mendes, 2016); the development of the Common Orthographic Vocabulary (VOC) and the national vocabulary database (Almeida et al., 2013); the Common Scientific and Technical Terminologies of the Portuguese Language project; grants and funding for projects and researchers that contribute to the promotion and dissemination of Portuguese; various meetings, publications and publications about the countries and varieties/variations of Portuguese.

According to what we have presented here, we believe that the contributions to the study of pluricentrism and the internationalisation of Portuguese, both from the point of view of their theoretical developments and their practical applications, are still partial, syncopated and small. We therefore agree with the idea that, when approaching the topics studied here, we should be careful about applying concepts or labels as if they were incontestable truths and perhaps it is always worth subjecting them to the prior scrutiny of reality, avoiding turning them into a petition of principle.

Final considerations, or 'Beyond a pluricentric and international Portuguese'

We tried to argue in our text that the concept of pluricentrism has now become an academic fad, especially when it comes to Portuguese. This fad has become even more widespread due to *wishful thinking on the part of some teachers and researchers (and perhaps some decision-makers in the field of Portuguese language policy)*, who want to apply a pluricentric and international status, sometimes imaginary or at least far removed from reality, to the Portuguese language, causing the concepts of 'pluricentrism' and 'internationalisation' to take on a different meaning to what their initial theorists had constructed them to have.

From this point of view, leaving aside the obvious fact that this article is in no way intended to denigrate the international relevance of the Portuguese language, nor the competence and

professionalism of the scholars and teachers who have dedicated themselves to it all over the world, but merely to suggest a more in-depth theoretical approach to the scientific themes in question, all is not completely lost. Paradoxical as it may seem, in fact, this condition of "moderate" pluricentricity of Portuguese, far from being a weakness with a view to its internationalisation, represents precisely the added value of the political project aimed at the desired transformation of this language from an intra-national dimension into an authentically inter-national one, since, as everyone knows, the international status of a language also involves the subtraction, not the addition, of its normative standards (and, for example, the current process of Esperantisation and Balkanisation of English, in the face of the maintenance of the global prestige of the two historical reference standards, is, in essence, the full demonstration of all this).

In this sense, if Portuguese really wants to aspire to become an international language, in the concrete sense of "language of wider communication", that is, capable of being used as an instrument of communication between foreign speakers of other languages and not just other internal varieties of it, it might be worth investing seriously in corpus planning towards the expressive demands of an alloglot learner rather than status planning according to the, albeit legitimate, identity ambitions of native varieties from the various local "centres".

And who knows, maybe a Portuguese that is a little less pluricentric, while still being different, and a little more international, while still being national, isn't the future we all want for this language.

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