

IDENTITY AND PLURILINGUIISM IN AFRICA – THE CASE OF MOZAMBIQUE

IDENTIDADE E PLURILINGUIISMO NA ÁFRICA: O CASO DE MOÇAMBIQUE

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Abstract: The African continent is a true ethnic-linguistic and cultural mosaic, composed of 55 countries and characterised by the existence of approximately 2.000 languages and a large number of ethnic groups. Mozambique in the extreme south of the continent does not escape from this rule. The country, with its approximately 25 million inhabitants is characterised by a significantly high ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity. In spite of this superdiversity it is possible to talk about an African identity and surely a Mozambican identity. The present study describes ethnic and cultural diversity in Africa, focusing on issues of plurilingualism or multilingualism in the continent. In addition, the study deals particularly with Mozambique's ethnolinguistic landscape, discussing the importance of preserving diversity and lastly it presents a number of considerations on those factors that contribute to the construction of national identity and to the development of our Mozambicaness in this Indian Ocean country.

Keywords: Identity, Plurilingualism, Ethnic-Linguistic and Cultural Diversity and Superdiversity

Resumo: O continente africano é um verdadeiro mosaico étnico-linguístico e cultural, composto por 55 países e caracterizado pela existência de aproximadamente 2.000 línguas e inúmeros grupos étnicos. Moçambique no extremo sul deste continente não escapa a esta regra. O país, com os seus cerca de 25 milhões de habitantes é também caracterizado por uma significativa diversidade étnica, linguística e cultural. Apesar desta superdiversidade é possível falar sobre uma identidade africana e uma identidade moçambicana. O presente estudo descreve a diversidade étnica e cultural em África, debruçando-se sobre a questão do plurilinguismo ou multilinguismo neste continente. Além disso, o estudo concentra-se particularmente sobre a paisagem etnolinguística de Moçambique, dissertando sobre a importância de preservar a diversidade e em última instância apresenta uma reflexão sobre aqueles factores que contribuem para a construção da identidade nacional e para o desenvolvimento da nossa moçambicanidade neste país banhado pelo Oceano Índico.

Palavras-chave: Identidade, Plurilinguismo, Diversidade Étnico-Linguística e Cultural e Superdiversidade.

Introduction

Africa, with an area of 30.221.532 km, has approximately 1.1 billion people. The population is mostly young, considering that over 50% is less than 19 years of age. The continent is extremely diverse and this superdiversity is present in the different characteristics of its geographical landscapes, in the different ethnic groups that inhabit its countries and/or nations, in the different existing racial groups, in the most varied languages and dialects, cultures, religions, political ideologies, clothing, cuisine, just to mention a few aspects.

Northern Africa, composed of countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Libya,

Mauritania, Morocco, Western Sahara, Sudan and Tunisia, is mainly Arabic, that is, the population in these countries are largely descendent of the Arabic explorers that have conquered the northern part of the continent in the seventeenth century. This population group is also known as the Berber people, which speak the Berber languages, part of the Afro-Asiatic language family. This region is geographically separated from the rest of Africa by the Sahara Desert. It is important to note that this separation is not only physical, but also cultural and political, considering that these countries on the whole are members of the Arabic league. The Islamic influence in this region is evident.¹

My definition of superdiversity is partially in agreement with what J. Normann Jorgensen and

Kasper Juffermans (2011) state, in the particular case of twenty-first century Europe,

Superdiversity is a term for the vastly increased range of resources, linguistic, religious, ethnic, cultural in the widest sense, that characterize late modern societies. The term stands for a “diversification of diversity” and describes a new order which is influenced by two sets of developments. One is the changing migrational patterns which can be observed in Europe. A second factor refers to technological developments which have made new social media of communication accessible to the masses, with mobile phones and the internet. These developments mean that the individual in late modern superdiverse societies is likely to encounter a much wider range of resources than was characteristic of Europe just a few decades ago. A consequence of this superdiversity is an increasingly important lack of predictability in everyday life. People must be prepared to meet and interpret phenomena, behaviors, attitudes, and meaning which they have not encountered before, in new contexts.

However, I would disagree with the authors, when they argue that superdiversity is a characteristic of a modern societies and that it applies to a new order represented by new communication technology where the mobile telephony is one of the major cornerstones. I advocate that this phenomenon is not new and that in fact it characterises pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa, in its whole and its countries individually. Indeed, it becomes important to highlight that the random partition of Africa in the 1880s came to contribute even further to this superdiversity considering that there was no effort on the part of the European powers at the time to respect the various then existing borders of ethnic-linguistic groups, clans or tribes.

As Mazrui (1998:5) indicates, the “national boundaries of most African States lack the underpinning of any national linguistic identity”; in the same token, Kashoki

¹ For additional information on the peoples of northern Africa, see Salem Chaker (2004)

(2003: 186) argues that:

The largely arbitrary nature of the manner in which present-day African countries came into being as sovereign nation states is directly responsible for their present highly multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual 'national' character – sometimes, as in the case of Tanzania and Nigeria, containing as many as 100 or more 'languages' or 'dialects' within their borders.

While both Mazrui and Kashoki defend the view that the current linguistic diversity of many African countries results from the manner in which their borders were conceived by the colonial powers, Makoni (2003), on the other hand, seems to put the blame for what he calls an '*exaggerated multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-tribal picture of African colonies*' over the missionaries who worked on the African languages; he argues:

Different languages were invented out of what was one language through a process marred by 'faulty transcriptions and mishearings', mediated through partial competence in African languages, and motivated by an overly sharp separation between language structure and language use (Campbell- Makini 2000) reinforced by the use of different orthographic systems.

Makoni carries on, giving the example of the linguistic varieties of the Sotho and Tswana people of South Africa, which he considers as languages and which are productively conceptualized as a continuum, and were defined as separate languages. The other example presented by Makoni, is that of the Xhosa and Zulu peoples, *whose languages are closely related*, and were classified as different languages *because of the rivalry between the different missionaries working with these two groups. In some cases even the names given to some of the African speech forms were invented by Europeans. Prior to European colonialism, the Shona peoples did not have a collective term to refer to themselves. In 1931, the name 'Shona' was used for the purpose of facilitating administrative classification. [The recommendation came] from a committee of missionaries, who subsequently commissioned a language expert to design an orthographic system for Shona – in spite of his lack of knowledge about the language'.* (2003:135)

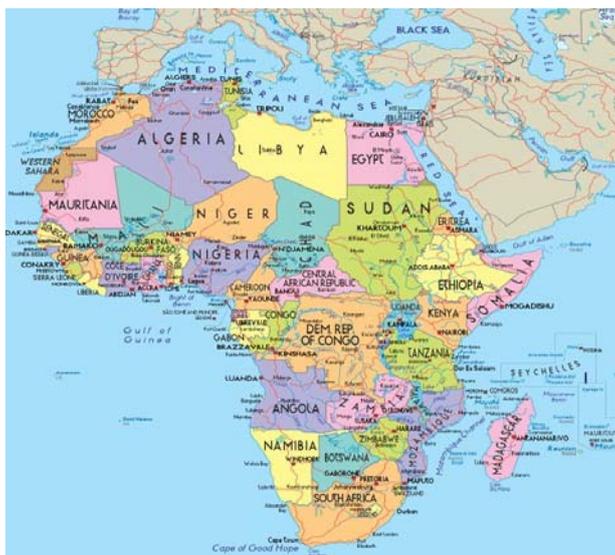
Interestingly enough and common to Mazrui, Makoni and Kashoki is the claim that the extensive linguistic diversity of African states is in part an artificial outcome of the colonisation process², that is, of the process leading to the establishment of the

² See Makoni and Mashiri (2006) who make a strong case for the need to 'deconstruct' and 'reconstruct' the concept of language in the African context. In their view, if "conceptualizations of African languages are to change, we have to *disinvent* the discourses of African languages. For *disinvention* to take place, it is necessary to intervene at a level of discourse, at the level of representations, and by implication at a

geographical borders of African states and also the result of the work of early missionaries.

The Map of Africa presented on figure I, below, witnesses the diversity of countries and nation states present in the African continent, including also the adjacent islands of Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritius and Comoros in the Indian Ocean and Cape Verde in the Atlantic Ocean.

Figure I – Map of Africa



The main linguistic varieties spoken in Africa include African endogenous languages, as well as European and Asiatic exogenous languages brought to the continent as a result of trade contacts between people of African and Arabic origins and also in consequence of colonialism. The dichotomy endogenous-exogenous languages should be understood, in this context, as referring, on one hand, to a language which has originated out of the continent, such as, for example, those languages of Asiatic origin examples of which are Arabic or languages of European origin such as Portuguese, English, among others. On the other hand, when we speak about endogenous languages, the term applies to those languages which are indigenous, native, vernacular³ and/or internal to African countries, that is, languages that have originated in this continent, such as, for example, Swahili, in Eastern Africa, Zulu in South Africa and several other

level of conceptualization. The ultimate objective of *disinvention* is to facilitate alternative ways of framing and conceptualizing African languages” (pp.64)

³ For a definition of this term, see Wardhaugh (1986)

languages belonging to the Bantu language family. In addition, it should be mentioned that, according to Guthrie (1948), the Bantu languages, which are part of the Niger-Congo⁴ linguistic subgroup, comprise a vast set of languages, mostly spoken in Sub-Saharan Africa. This term is also used to refer to ethnic groups that speak one of these languages. Guthrie (1948) argues that the Bantu languages have Proto-Bantu as a proto-language.

When we discuss the language question in Africa, a major difficulty that often emerges is that of deciding on the exact number of languages spoken in this continent. This difficulty partly results from the fact that many of the varieties spoken are mutually intelligible. In other words, speakers of linguistic varieties classified as different and autonomous languages are capable of communicating with each other in their respective languages, in such a way that often a doubt emerges related to whether we are in the presence of two different languages or two different dialects of a single language. Specifically, when we compare the numbers presented by Guthrie (1948), referring to 250 Bantu languages and those presented by Ethnologue (2006), referring to 535 Bantu languages, for example, we observe a significant discrepancy. This fact should not constitute a surprise as, as stated by Makoni (2003), a large part of initial studies on African languages were conducted by individuals who did not master these languages. Guthrie himself (1948:5) acknowledges that this difficulty results from the absence of a classification method developed for this group of clearly related linguistic varieties.

Another aspect that deserves attention when discussing issues of superdiversity in Africa, is the fact that plurilingualism and/ or multilingualism are part of the day-to-day of the Africans. I define plurilingualism, as the ability of an individual to master more than one linguistic variety. Overall, in addition to the country's official language, which is a second language (L2) for most and which is also the language that serves as medium of instruction and the language used in public administration, the language of the judiciary, the law and order or the police, etc., the majority of Africans also have a first language (L1), which in general is an African language. Therefore, their day-to-day is characterized by code-switching⁵, according to the situation or context in which they find themselves in, specifically in the urban context.

⁴ For a detailed description of the classification of African languages, see Guthrie (1948).

⁵ For a definition of code-switching, see Valdés-Fallis (1977).

Mozambique – Geographic Situation

Mozambique, with a total area of 801,590 square kilometres⁶, and stretching itself 2,500 km along the Indian Ocean, is a country that is geographically located in Southern Africa. The country is bordered by the Indian Ocean to the East, the Republic of Tanzania to the North, Malawi and Zambia to the Northwest, Zimbabwe to the West and the Republics of Swaziland and South Africa to the Southwest. Maputo, located in the far south of Mozambique, with a total of 1.094.315 inhabitants, is the capital of the country. Maputo is located nearly 2000 km from the northern-most area of Mozambique. The second major capital city is Beira, located in the centre of the country, with 436.240 inhabitants. Nampula, in the north of the country, is the third largest capital city, with 477.900 inhabitants (Census 2007, INE).

Mozambique is administratively divided into eleven provinces that are located in the three main regions, north, centre and south. In the north, we find the provinces of Cabo Delgado, Niassa, Nampula, Zambézia and Tete. In the centre, we find the provinces of Manica and Sofala, and in the south, we have Inhambane, Gaza, Maputo Province and Maputo City. The Map of Mozambique, with its main provincial capital cities and the neighbouring countries is presented below. If we observe the Map of Africa, on page 5, above, we can have an insight on the geographical position of Mozambique in the African continent.

Figure II - Map of Mozambique

⁶ Slightly over double the size of Germany (357,114 km²).



According to the National Census 2007, the total population of the country is estimated in 20,530,714 people, of whom 9,787,135 are men and 10,743,579 are women. The population density is 25/km². The majority of the population (99.66%) is of Bantu origin. Literacy is estimated at about 50 %. Nearly two-thirds of the population of Mozambique live in rural areas.

The Republic of Mozambique is a member of SADC - the Southern African Development Community, which is composed of thirteen (13) other member states, namely, Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Among SADC's main aims are the creation of an integrated regional trade and economy, and the promotion of more coordination and cooperation between the member states in the areas of peace and security. In addition, Mozambique is a member of the African Union (AU) ⁷, a continent-wide organisation, with 53 member states.

⁷ The African Union (AU) replaces the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), which had been established in 1963 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with the objectives, among others, of promoting understanding among

Among the main objectives of the AU is the acceleration of the process of continental integration, so that Africa can be an active player in the global economy, while simultaneously addressing a variety of social, economic and political issues. In 1995, Mozambique became the first non-former British colony to join the British Commonwealth of Nations. According to Manuel Tomé (1999)⁸, the decision to join the Commonwealth was mainly dictated by regional reasons, and by the need to diversify Mozambique's cooperation, and expand its businesses and trade partners in the region.

Ethnic Groups and Religions

Mozambique is a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual country. The country's ethno-linguistic and cultural heritage is a blend of the influence of the Islamic Coastal traders, European colonizers, and the Indigenous peoples. It is important to highlight that quite a number of the ethno-linguistic groups present in Mozambique are also present in the neighbouring countries. Particular examples are the Changana or XiChangana people and language, which are both present and spoken in southern Mozambique and in the Republic of South Africa. Sixteen (16) main ethnic groups or tribes are recognised in Mozambique, and the main ones are the Makhuwa, the Tsonga (or Shangaan), Chokwe, Manyika, and Sena. The Makhuwa or Makua-Lomwé is the largest ethnic group in the country, accounting for 37% of the population. The Makhuwa are mainly concentrated in the northern region of the country, and North of the Zambezi River, particularly in Nampula and Zambézia provinces. Other ethnic groups found in the northern region are the Yao (Ajawa), in Niassa Province, and the Makonde, who live along the Rovuma River. In addition, other African ethnic groups based in the north are the Nguni and the Maravi.

The main group residing south of the Zambezi River is Tsonga, corresponding to about 23% of the total population. In addition, we also find the Chopi, living in the coast of Inhambane Province and the Shona or Karanga (about 9%), residing in the

African peoples and unity, solidarity and cooperation among African states. Although a number of the underlying objectives of the AU are still quite similar to those of the OAU, a few of the innovations brought by the new AU is the need to unify the continent and improve the living standards of the people in Africa, through the establishment of a common parliament (the Pan-African Parliament), aimed at giving Africans a greater say in continental leadership; the Central Bank, with a view of running an Africa-wide economy; and the Court of Justice, established with the purpose of making those responsible for human rights abuses accountable for their actions. For further details on the African Union organisation (AU) and its structures, see the Pan-African Parliament website – <http://www.pan-africanparliament.org/> and/or the Constitutive Act of the African Union, presented at the following site: http://www.au2002.gov.za/docs/key_oau/au_act.htm.

⁸ FRELIMO's General Secretary, in an interview with the Expresso newspaper, on November 13, 1999.

central region. Besides populations of African descent, we also find population groups of European descent (0.06%), mixed Euro- Africans (0.2%), Indians (0.08%) and Chinese. Although there are a number of common features between the different ethnic groups or tribes of Mozambique, such as, for example, the belief in the spirit of the ancestors, it is important to highlight that one of the main distinctive features of some of the groups north of the Zambeze, particularly the Makhuwa, is that they are mostly matrilineal. On the other hand, the groups south of the Zambeze, such as the Changana, are mainly patrilineal. It is equally relevant to highlight at this stage that each and various ethnic groups or tribes are very much aware of their distinctiveness from the other ethnic groups⁹.

The main religions are the Roman Catholic Church, spread throughout the country, Islam, particularly in the north, and Protestants. Roman Catholics account for 23.8%, Muslims correspond to 17.8%, people with other beliefs (including protestant) correspond to 17.8%, Zionist Christians¹⁰ account for 17.5%, and 23.1% do not have any religious beliefs (1997 Census). It should be highlighted that the African Traditional Religion, which is characterized by a belief in the spirits of the ancestors, is still very strong in most people's lives. Even people who are officially rated as Roman Catholics or Anglicans, and who go to church on a regular basis, would still resort to the African Traditional Religion, and consult the spirits for any important step or decision in their life, such as, for example, in order to get a job, a promotion or to have a happy marriage¹¹. In this way, it could be argued, that people do not look at the different religions as being mutually exclusive, but rather as complementary.

Mozambique – Ethno-Linguistic Mosaic

Having briefly looked at the ethnic groups and the main religions present in Mozambique, this section will focus on the languages spoken in the territory and the number of speakers. It is important to notice that most of the language names coincide with the designation given to the ethnic groups; in other words, the Makhuwa ethnic group, for example, speaks the Emakhuwa or Makhuwa language; the Makonde people speak the Makonde language, and so on. Another issue to retain is that for many of the

⁹ A very interesting review of the issue of the ethnic identities of the members of the FRELIMO movement, during the armed struggle for the liberation of Mozambique, is presented by Robinson (2006) in his PhD thesis, where he refers to claims made by the members of the guerrilla movement, that the southerners were marginalising those from the north

¹⁰ An African independent church, very much influenced by traditional beliefs.

¹¹ A description of the important role played by traditional healers (or *curandeiros*), spirit mediums and witchdoctors can be found at http://www.questconnect.org/africa_Mozambique.htm

languages mentioned, there are often different designations or variant names. In other words, the language known as Makhuwa, for example, is sometimes referred to as Emakhuwa or Makua. In fact, in the NUGLOnline (2009), under the Makhuwa Group (P30), three different variant names are presented for Makhuwa: Makhuwa, Emakhuwa and Makua. Under the Tswa-Rhonga Group (S50), the following variants appear for Changana: Changana, Xichangana and Tsonga. According to Maho (2009: 6-7), a possible explanation for the existence of many variant names for one particular language results from the fact that “the literature is not always clear about what is a variant name, a dialect name, a place name, or whatever, so sometimes a string of names may signify a set of related dialects (hyponyms)”. This may also constitute a result of the fact that the standardization and modernization of the orthography of those languages is still ongoing.

There is no agreement on the exact number of languages spoken in the Republic of Mozambique. Ethnologue mentions 43 and NELIMO¹² cites 20. This lack of agreement is probably a result of the fact that, so far, no thorough sociolinguistic or dialectological study has been conducted on the linguistic varieties spoken in the country¹³. Adding to this is the fact that the work done by the missionaries, although of inestimable value in contributing to bringing the Mozambican National Languages into written form, probably also resulted in an exaggerated listing of the languages spoken in Mozambique. The national languages of Mozambique are classified as belonging to the Bantu language family, most particularly to the Niger-Congo grouping (Guthrie 1971). In addition to those presented below, several other subzones and linguistic groupings are also considered in this classification¹⁴. According to Guthrie, the Bantu languages spoken in Mozambique are classified in four major linguistic zones, respectively:

1. Zone G (G40): Swahili
2. Zone P (P20): Yao [P21 Yao; P23 Makonde; P30 Makua]
3. Zone N (N30): Nyanja [N40 Senga-Sena]
4. Zone S (S10): Shona [S50: Tswa-Ronga; S60 Chopi]

¹² NELIMO is the Centre for the Study of Mozambican Languages, based at Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo.

¹³ There is no doubt that this type of studies is extremely important; as Guus Extra (2008: 7) points out, language surveys are extremely relevant, as they can “offer valuable insights into both the distribution and vitality of languages across different population groups” In addition, these kinds of data are also crucial for devising comprehensive educational policies that consider the teaching of both national majority and home minority languages (Extra and Yagmur 2004: 69)

¹⁴ Firmino (2005: 47-49) presents a detailed listing of the four linguistic zones and additional subzones in which the Bantu Languages of Mozambique fall.

Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that Mozambique is a highly linguistically diverse country. Lopes (1998:446), drawing on Robinson (1993)¹⁵ and Grimes (1992)¹⁶, claims that Mozambique is ranked “among the 15 most linguistically diverse countries in Africa”, meaning that in numerical terms, no language “can claim majority language status at a national level”. In addition to Portuguese, and the Mozambican National Languages of Bantu origin, English is spoken in the country, as well as Arabic, which is also used and spoken on a daily basis, particularly for religious purposes, and as medium of instruction in the Islamic schools. The country’s only official language is Portuguese. It is estimated that approximately 40% of the Mozambicans speak Portuguese as their second language and only about 6.5% speak it as their first language. It should be highlighted that the literature refers to an emergence of a Mozambican Portuguese, which borrows quite extensively from the Mozambican national languages and presents a number of neologisms.

The largest linguistic groups are the Emakhuwa, followed by the Cisena, Xichangana, Elomwe, and Echuwabo. Emakhuwa speakers amount to about 24.8% of the country’s total population, followed by Cisena and Xichangana with 11.2%, Elomwe (7.9%), and Echuwabo (7.5%). The Portuguese language is mostly spoken in the urban areas or the major cities, and as stated by Gonçalves (2009) such a high predominance or concentration of speakers of Portuguese in the cities is particularly linked to socio-economic factors, namely the fact that knowledge of this language constitutes a pre-condition for access to formal work for all citizens of Mozambique, both in rural and urban areas. The Bantu languages of Mozambique are strongly considered as vehicles and symbols of the Mozambican national ethnolinguistic identity and as such their vitality is relatively high. They are still being transmitted from generation to generation, particularly in the rural areas and they cannot be classified as endangered languages.

Therefore, in addition to the languages of Bantu origin, the Portuguese language is spoken as the only official language of the country; this language, loaded with

¹⁵ For whom high linguistic diversity refers to “a situation where no more than fifty percent of the population speak the same language”, and who argues that “a ranking of degree of linguistic diversity should not be based on the absolute number of languages in a country, but rather on the percentage of the population speaking any single language” (pp. 52-5)

¹⁶ Whose data on countries of Africa where no single language group exceeds 50 % of the population show that 25 of the total number of African countries (58) fall into this category” (pp.91).

prestige, was adopted as official at the time of the country's Independence in 1975. The adoption of the former colonial languages as official languages has been common practice in many independent countries in Africa. Among the reasons that appear to be behind the choice of the ex-coloniser's languages at the expense of the local African languages is the fact that the newly-independent countries did not really have any other alternative. It should be said that, in many countries, most of the African languages either did not have a written form or decisions had to be made concerning the language to select from amidst the mosaic of languages.

According to Richard Ruiz (1988:7), a large part of the work in the field of language planning has been inspired by the 'preponderance of problem-oriented language planning approaches', which seem to establish a link between language and language diversity with social problems and therefore multilingualism is perceived as ultimately leading to a lack of social cohesiveness; with everyone speaking their own language, political and social consensus being *impossible* (pp.10)¹⁷. In fact, Roy-Campbell (2003:96) referring to Tsonope (1995) argues that there is a generalized "misconception that encouragement of several languages militates against national unity and highlights the risk of accentuating cleavages between communities"¹⁸.

In Mozambique, according to Ganhão (1979), Portuguese was certainly a politically neutral language, spoken by a very small percentage of Mozambicans, but which would serve well the purposes of nation building, and surely a better option than any other national language for avoiding conflicts. The view of multilingualism or language diversity as a problem was certainly present in Mozambique at the time of independence. The vision of a multilingual Mozambique was out of the political agenda; the key goal at the time was to urgently build the Mozambican nation and make it work as such. The fact that there were so many languages spoken by the various ethnic groups constituting the new Mozambican state, and the fact that none of them was spoken nation-wide as a common language or *Lingua Franca*, would probably have constituted a hindrance to the birth of the new nation.

¹⁷ A very interesting critical review of the suggested correlation between high linguistic diversity and level of socioeconomic development or the relationship between multilingualism and social wealth of a country is presented by Coulmas 1992, who draws on Pool (1972: 222) who argues that "linguistically highly fragmented countries are always poor".

¹⁸ See David Laitin (2004) for an interesting discussion of the correlation between language policy and civil war and the evidence he presents against "claims that the elimination of minority grievances would be a sure fire way of lowering the incidences of civil war" (p. 178). See also François Grin (2004) for the costs of maintaining cultural diversity.

To conclude this discussion on the linguistic landscape of Mozambique, it is worth highlighting that the value of English in Mozambique is widely recognized at all levels and sectors of the society. Such a value is illustrated by the high demand for English language skills throughout the country, not only in the main provincial capitals such as Maputo, but also in rural areas, particularly in those areas where foreign companies or international organizations operate. The presence of the British Council, the Institute of Languages, and international language schools, as well as private and public schools providing English language teaching/learning courses, confirms the perception of importance of commanding the English language. Similarly to the Portuguese language, this language is equally loaded with prestige. Two reasons presented as dictating the relevant role played by the English language in Mozambique are:

- 1) Mozambique's geographical position, the fact that the majority of countries in Southern Africa have English as Official Language;
- 2) Mozambique's membership to SADC (the Southern African Development Community), the Commonwealth of Nations, the AU (African Union), and other international organizations, where English is the main working language.

Having reviewed the linguistic situation of Mozambique, what follows is a brief discussion on the importance of maintaining diversity and linguistic pluralism in Mozambique.

The Value of Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

There is no doubt that managing diversity either linguistic, cultural, ethnic or of any other nature constitutes a challenge or as stated by Jutta Limbach (2008), is a hard and expensive process, which is however, worth it¹⁹. I defend the idea that society at large, the State, other stakeholders such as the school and the family should assume an explicit advocacy position in favour of diversity at all levels of society. Multilingualism and ethnolinguistic and cultural diversity should be seen as sources of knowledge and enrichment (Extra & Yagmur 2004), much more as an asset than a disadvantage (Hélot & Young (2006), or as correctly put by Jo Lo Bianco (1987) as resources for the

¹⁹ On the 2nd February 2008, Jutta Limbach, President of the Goethe-Institut, stated the following, in her paper entitled *Plurilingualism and Multilingualism – Obstacles on the Route towards a European Public*: “For some, the postulate of multilingualism appears to be an annoying national relic within the mosaic of the future European culture. However, this criticism misjudges the very special nature of European integration. The EU member states and their people do not want to follow the model of the nation state when shaping the European Union. When singing the praise of multilingualism, we must not forget a particularly weighty argument – the fact that language pluralism proves to be arduous and expensive”.

individual, society and economy. Ethnolinguistic and cultural diversity enrich our world and our reality and the benefits of multilingualism are also manifested in the facilitation of exchange of information, facilitation of transfer of technology, promotion of mobility and integration in a specific society.

A vital insight is that we cannot afford to lose any language or languages²⁰. A multilingual diverse world is therefore a better option than a monolingual one, as it entails the possibility of valuable knowledge even in “smaller” local languages that could possibly have a life-sustaining or life- saving relevance²¹. Behind every language there is a whole wealth of traditions and cultures that would be worthwhile preserving. There is no doubt that language diversity is good because it enriches our experience of reality. In accordance with principles 5 and 6 of the Action Plan for the implementation of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, there is a need to safeguard the linguistic heritage of humanity and give support to expression, creation and dissemination in the greatest possible number of languages and encourage linguistic diversity, while respecting the mother tongue at all levels of education, wherever possible, and fostering the learning of several languages from the earliest age. (2001: 15).

The existence of a large number of languages and cultures within the borders of a specific territory presents lots of challenges related to the management of these differences. The questions are normally related to the role and function of the various languages. Should these languages be promoted, encouraged or ignored. Notwithstanding the difficulties in the management of differences, the effort is worthwhile. In order to explain the concept of Linguistic Diversity and the importance of preserving it, Garcia (1992) uses the analogy known as the **Language Garden**, which compares the many different languages in the world today with the different flower and plant types or species. She defends the view that if the countries of the world were gardens with a single variety of flowers, with the same colour, size and shape, the world would surely be a boring place. This analogy implies that if the peoples of the

²⁰ Or as put by Fishman (1995: 60-61), “What is lost when a language is lost, especially in the short run, is the sociocultural integration of the generations, the cohesiveness, naturalness and quiet creativity, the secure sense of identity, even without politicized consciousness of identity, the sense of collective worth of a community of a people, the particular value of being “Xians in Xish”, rather than “Xians in Yish” or “Yians in Yish”, even when the conveniences of daily living are “greener in the other field”. He goes on and says that “what is lost is cultural creativity (song, story, theatre, myth, dance and artefacts and in the representational arts) that ultimately enriches not only the immediate vicinity in the original language but also the total human experience in a myriad of translations”.

²¹ Particularly in the context of epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and others.

world spoke only majority languages, the world would not be so interesting. According to Baker (2001: 53), “the analogy suggests that language diversity requires planning and care”, and that “a laissez-faire situation is less desirable than deliberate, rational language planning. Gardeners are needed (e.g. teachers in schools) to plant, water, fertilize and reseed the different minority flowers in the garden to ensure an enriching world language garden”.

This is certainly an interesting way of looking at the diversity of languages existing in the world today, and of pointing out the need to care for and preserve such diversity, because the many languages, small or large, have a potential value due to the many cultures and traditions with which they are associated. Obviously, one of the best ways of making sure that the many languages will keep their vitality, regardless of whether they are majority or minority is by using the school system as the guardian of such languages. It is well established that the use of languages in the education system, either as medium of instruction or resources, not only ensures their survival, but also their spread to a larger number of speakers, as well as a better participation in the teaching and learning process on the part of both teachers and pupils.

A few Considerations on the issue of Superdiversity and Identity

In order to be able to talk with insight about some of the factors that determine our African identity, at large, and our Mozambican identity or Mozambicaness in particular, I asked the following question to a number of colleagues at *Universidade Pedagógica*: When we are abroad, in the diaspora, when we meet in the streets of an European City or any other region of the world, what attracts us to other Mozambicans with whom we meet? What ties me to someone else I discover comes from Mozambique and is Mozambican?

Several answers were presented, including the symbols of our homeland, that is, the flag, the national anthem, etc. Other answers referred to our socialization, that is, the way we were brought up, how we were educated, how we grew up; the school, what we have learned then. There was also mention of all those elements that are common to us, elements and experiences that we share, all those elements that we recall; the smallest things, the different smells and tastes, the way we are.

Adding to this vast list, I would say that our Mozambicaness, our identity as a nation composed of this extreme ethnic, linguistic, cultural, political and ideological diversity constitutes a result of our past, present and aspired future experiences; it is

indeed a result of those common points of reference, of the big histories and small stories, of the characters that have made or are still part of it, of the individual dreams, but also common and shared dreams; of the difficulties faced together as a nation, of the hard and good moments and periods and of all experiences we have shared, positive and negative; this is what makes us Mozambican, nonetheless our major and minor differences; the fact that we belong to the same geographical and/or physical space we call HOME!

By way of conclusion, I would say that in spite of the existence of various frontiers of ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, political, and ideological identities, it is also possible to talk about a common identity in Africa and certainly in Mozambique, but also of new, multiple and fluid identities. We are Mozambican belonging to specific ethnic groups, but even before that and above all, we are Mozambican. As argued by Le Page (1985), the equation 'one race = one culture = one language' is manifestly misleading, both in terms of real biological criteria, and also in terms of popular stereotypes and in many linguistic communities, linguistic and ethnic frontiers are far from being isomorphous (234-235). Language is certainly an identity factor, through which an individual's social and ethnic identity is manifested; however, it is not the only one; it is just one element among various.

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