



Descriptive analysis of the Action Plan of Praia (2021) of CPLP

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ABSTRACT

The Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) was established in 1996. One of the main objectives of the CPLP is to promote internationally the Portuguese language. Since 2010, the CPLP has been publishing, every three years, an Action Plan, discussing activities and results to be achieved in the field of language promotion. In this article, the authors aim to elaborate a descriptive analysis of the last Action Plan, redacted in 2021, in the city of Praia, Cape Verde. The analysis shed light on the impersonal, general, and incomplete nature of the policies outlined in the Action Plan which influence the policies implementation as well as any measuring process of their effectiveness.

KEYWORDS: Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP); Action Plan of Praia; Internationalization of Portuguese Language.

Análise descritiva do Plano de Ação de Praia (2021) da CPLP

RESUMO

A Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP) foi criada em 1996 e tem como um dos seus objetivos promover e divulgar a língua portuguesa. Desde 2010, a cada três anos, a CPLP elabora um Plano de Ação para divulgar as próximas atividades e resultados que pretende alcançar. Neste artigo, temos como objetivo principal elaborar uma análise descritiva do último Plano de Ação, criado em 2021, na cidade de Praia, Cabo Verde. Nossas conclusões são que a maioria das ações propostas no Plano de Ação de Praia estão redigidas de forma impessoal, de maneira generalizada e não são detalhadas, o que torna difícil a construção de ferramentas para avaliá-las ou verificar se essas ações estão funcionando na prática.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP); Plano de Ação de Praia; Internacionalização da Língua Portuguesa.



Analyse descriptive du Plan d'Action de Praia (2021) de la CPLP

RÉSUMÉ

La Communauté des pays de langue portugaise (CPLP) a été créée en 1996. L'un de ses objectifs est de promouvoir et de diffuser la langue portugaise. Depuis 2010, tous les trois ans, la CPLP prépare un plan d'action pour faire connaître les prochaines activités et les résultats qu'elle souhaite atteindre. Dans cet article, nous avons pour objectif principal d'élaborer une analyse descriptive du dernier plan d'action, créé en 2021, dans la ville de Praia, au Cap-Vert. La méthodologie utilisée ici est l'analyse de contenu. Nos conclusions sont pour la plupart des actions proposées dans le Plan d'Action de Praia qui sont écrites de manière impersonnelle, généralisée et ne sont pas détaillées, ce qui rend difficile la construction d'outils pour les évaluer ou vérifier si ces actions fonctionnent en pratique.

MOTS CLÉS: Communauté des pays de langue portugaise (CPLP); Plan d'action pour la plage; Internationalisation de la langue portugaise.

1. Introduction

The Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) was founded during the 1st Conference of Heads of State and Government of Portuguese-speaking Countries, in 1996. One of the main objectives of this organization is the promotion and diffusion of the Portuguese language worldwide (CPLP, 2007).

The lead actors of the CPLP are called 'member states' (Estados-Membros). They are the nine countries that have Portuguese as their official language: Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Timor-Leste. Along with the member states, the CPLP is also formed by 'associate observers' (Observadores Associados) – more than twenty non-Portuguese-speaking Countries that participate in the official CPLP meetings but not in the decision-making process of the organization (CPLP, 2007).

Since 2010, the promotion of the Portuguese language is discussed among member states in International Conferences on the Portuguese Language in the World System (CILPSM) every three years. The conference deliberations are included and listed in documents which take the name of Action Plans (APs). The APs are documents redacted by the CPLP and approved by the nine member states, that outline strategies and policies for the international promotion of the Portuguese language.

Four APs were published by the CPLP until now:

1. The AP of Brasília (AP-B), published in 2010;
2. The AP of Lisbon (AP-L), published in 2014;
3. The AP of Dili (AP-D), published in 2017;
4. The AP of Praia (AP-P), published in 2021.

The article which follows aims to provide a descriptive analysis of the last AP, that is, the AP of Praia (AP-P). The content of the AP-P is divided into five different topics: (1) Public policies for promoting the reading; (2) Diversity in Portuguese language literary writing; (3) Portuguese



language teaching in mobility contexts; (4) Science, investigation and innovation in Portuguese language; and (5) Creative economies and technologies (CPLP, 2021).

The first section of the article introduces theoretical frameworks on language policy and planning which have underpinned the analysis of the document. References to the methodology employed for examining the text will then follow. The third section of the article is dedicated to the analysis of the AP-P conducted with a specific reference to the syntactic construction of the policies and their content. By drawing on the aspects that the analysis conducted has shed light on, the article concludes with reflections on the possible contribution of the study conducted to the current debate on the role of the CPLP in the Portuguese language promotion area.

2. Theoretical aspects – language policy and language spread

Language policy and language planning concepts emerged at the end of the 1950s and developed during the 1960s and 1970s. To date, however, there is not a generally accepted or standard consensus on the definition of the two terms nor on their relationship (SILVA, 2013). While for some scholars, planning subsumes policy (KAPLAN; BALDAUF, 1997), for others, policy subsumes planning (SCHIFFMAN, 1996). For this reason, the two terms are not often used together as, for many scholars, one already implies the other. Moreover, while language planning is the most widely used term in the English academic tradition, language policy (política linguística) is predominant in the Portuguese academic tradition (SILVA, 2013).

Even though definitions vary from scholar to scholar as their approach towards the discipline differs, language policy and planning – as a sphere of action – has often been described as a language change or a language influence. According to Cooper, language planning consists of “deliberate efforts to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes” (COOPER, 1989, p. 45). In Kaplan and Baldauf’s words, language policy represents “a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the society, group or system” (KAPLAN; BALDAUF 1997, p. xi).

Although initially moved by a strong sense of optimism and ideological neutrality, scholars have gradually come to an agreement that language policy and planning activities do not dissociate from the political and economic sphere of the policy makers and promoters. On the contrary, far from the idea that they are the expressions of natural, common-sense assumptions about language in society, language policy and planning are increasingly interpreted as a mechanism through which dominant sociopolitical groups establish hegemony in language use (TOLLEFSON, 1991). Language policy decisions, as highlighted by Tollefson, “serve and undermine particular political and economic interests” (TOLLEFSON, 1991, p. 32). In this regard, Rajagopalan (2013) clarifies that language policies do not exclusively belong to the language field, as the term might suggest. Instead, language policies refer to decisions taken at the macro level as well as to activities that enable the implementation of these decisions (GUIMARÃES et al., 2019). For this reason, language policies are often interpreted as a “field of

political action” whose interventions can be carried out for a diversity of purposes (COOPER, 1989), in a variety of political and social contexts (SPOLSKY, 2004) as well as in implicit and explicit dimensions (SHOHAMY, 2006).

The language policy interventions outlined in the AP under analysis, due to their language promotion aim, fall within the category of language spread policies. Ammon (1997, p. 51) defines language spread policies as “a policy which has as its objective the spread of a specific language, or sometimes a set of languages, either to new speakers or to new domains”. Within his analysis, Ammon acknowledges that language spread policy may be either internal – promoting the spread of a language within national borders – or external – promoting the spread of a language internationally. This article focuses on external language spread policies due to the international address of the interventions outlined in the AP document.

In Ammon’s opinion (1997) language spread policies are often defensive. The author suggests that these policies respond to a perception that the use of a particular language is in decline, and consequently that the prestige, or symbolic capital of a country or a group of countries is being reduced (BOURDIEU, 1991). Language spread policy can therefore be interpreted as an attempt to (re)claim national prestige through the diffusion of language. Phillipson (2008, p. 2301) in this regard recognizes that the “promotion of a language has remained a significant dimension of the foreign policy of the world’s most powerful states”. Moreover, Phillipson (1992) argues that language spread activities have been a priority of former colonies in an attempt to reinstate a postcolonial power through the spread of their linguistic and non-linguistic cultural products. According to the author, language spread involves structural and ideological connections with linguistic imperialism which interlocks, in turn, with economic, political, military and communication spheres in an asymmetrical world order. For this reason, in Phillipson’s view, the analysis of language spread policies cannot prescind from considerations on the policy agents and particular interest that account for the expansion of the language (PHILLIPSON, 2008, p. 89).

Acknowledging Phillipson’s political and postcolonial understanding of language spread policies, this study will adopt the concept of language spread policy as a framework for the investigation of the origin and structure of the AP and the outlined intervention.

3. Methodology

This section discusses the methodological approach adopted for this analysis. With the aim of exploring the document’s structural and thematic composition, descriptive research has been carried out. Descriptive research, according to Selltitz, Wrightsman and Cook (1965), aims to describe a phenomenon or a situation in detail, focusing on what is occurring rather than why or how. In line with Gil (1999), this type of research, providing a thick description of a specific topic or event, uncovers relationships among the different aspects involved in the context under analysis. However, while for some scholars, descriptive analysis is at the core of all research (VERGARA, 2000), for others it is only a peripheral and non-determinant aspect of research. Castro (1976), among others, considers that descriptive research captures and depicts only the scenario of a situation, without providing the tools for the actual examination.



When we say that research is descriptive, we mean that is limited to a pure and simple description of each of the variables, separately, without their association (CASTRO, 1976, p. 66).

Acknowledging the central yet limited character of descriptive research, it has still been deemed the most appropriate methodological approach by the authors in light of the aims which moved the research conducted. The analysis carried out is motivated by the authors' intention to initiate and encourage debates on the topic of the Action Plans and serve as a reference for further research. For this reason, the analysis which follows does not pretend to figure as a comprehensive investigation of the text, but rather as an introductory discussion on the AC-P, its structure and thematic.

This exploratory nature of the analysis conducted is also reflected in the choice of redacting the following article in a language in which APs have limitedly been discussed. Moved by the purpose of spreading the discussion beyond the reach of Portuguese language scholars, this contribution adopts the English language as a means of interaction and exchange of reflections with international scholars working in the language promotion field.

4. AP-P descriptive analysis

This section, divided in three parts, discusses the descriptive analysis conducted on the AC-P. After providing an overview (4.1) on the textual organization of the AP-P document, a syntactic analysis of the policies outlined in the document and reflections on the predominant thematic (4.2) in the AP-P will follow.

4.1. AP-P textual organization

The AP-P comprises 11 pages. The document contains four distinct parts:

1. A detailed 'Introduction' with six paragraphs;
2. The 'Scientific Segment' in which policies to be undertaken are described and listed into five different topics;
3. The 'Follow-up to the IV Conference' (the 4th International Conference on the Portuguese Language in the World System);
4. The final part is named 'Attachment – Implementation of the Action Plans of Brasília, Lisbon and Dili'. This section presents useful information on how previous AP policies were implemented. However, the data presented refers exclusively to Angola.

With regard to the 'Introduction', three different sections can be identified:

- 1st paragraph: information about the date and place of the 4th International Conference on the Portuguese Language in the World System (CILPSM) (Conferência Internacional sobre a Língua Portuguesa no Sistema Mundial);

- 2nd and 3rd paragraphs: history of the previous CILPSM and the officialization of the World Portuguese Language Day;
- 4th, 5th and 6th paragraphs: report on the discussion carried out during the 4th CILPSM.

The first paragraph of the AP-P states that the 4th CILPSM took place in the city of Praia, between May 26 and 28, 2021. After that, in the second paragraph, there is an overview of the conferences held previously: the first CILPSM, that took place in Brasília, in 2010; the second in Lisbon, in 2013; and the third in the city of Dili, in 2016. The UNESCO decision to declare the 5th of May as the World Day of the Portuguese Language, in 2019, is highlighted in the third paragraph. The fourth paragraph states that three main topics are at the core of the 4th conference, namely:

- To promote the exchange of knowledge and experiences on the multiple dimensions of the promotion and diffusion of the Portuguese language;
- To track the implementation of APs of Brasilia, Lisbon and Dili;
- And to define priorities for the next three years (CPLP, 2021, p. 03, authors' translation).

The fifth paragraph mentions that the main theme of the 4th CILPSM is 'Horizons and Perspectives of the Portuguese Language' (CPLP, 2021, p.3, authors' translation). Today, the conference is often referred to for emphasizing the pluricentric nature of the Portuguese language and the pluricentric interventions of the CPLP. By discussing this nature of the language, the CPLP states in this section, its support for the International Institute of the Portuguese Language IILP (Instituto Internacional de Língua Portuguesa - IILP) – executive body of the CPLP in language promotion matters.

Finally, the sixth paragraph of the AP-P lists the five action lines – previously mentioned in the introduction – of the 4th CILPSM.

4.2. AP-P policies: a structural analysis

From a structural point of view, the AP-P shares a similar organization as the previous APs documents. After a brief introduction, centred on the discussion from which policies outlined in the document were originated or the specific thematic addressed in the AP, the four APs present a main central section in which policies to be implemented are described and listed. These sections, which occupy most of the documents' text, are divided into subsections according to the thematic that each document specifically focuses on. While some APs introduce each subsection with a short description of the thematic addressed (see for example the AP-L), in the AP-P no prior contextualization is provided for each thematic. Due to the absence of contextualizing elements, policies in the AP-P, introduced by bullet points, are presented as a listing.

Across the documents, polices are presented in different lengths. While some interventions are described synthetically,

- To invest in digital editions of books in addition to the physical versions (CPLP, 2021, p. 4, authors' translation).

others figure as more elaborated. Indeed, few policies present detailed aspects which contextualize the policy in a specific field of action and support the audience's understanding of potential outcomes.

- To set up research funding within the CPLP and its partners for the creation of research programs in a collaborative way and with shared management (e.g. mobility programs, research grants, publications). (CPLP, 2021, p. 6, authors' translation).

Among the latter, a more specific character, attributed by the use of thematic terminology, characterizes policies which addresses interventions within the field of linguistics.

- To use computational methods in the study of Portuguese varieties;
- To adopt incremental text processing systems in Portuguese and African languages, which allow for automatic processing;
- To share contrastive studies of Portuguese varieties;
- To clarify the implemented methodology and selection criteria for lexemes to be included in a lexicographical file (VOC);
- To insert the meaning, etymology, co-text, context and respective sources of these fields into the description of lexicographical record entries (VOC), which allow the reader to comprehend how the lexical unit has been used (CPLP, 2021, p. 6, authors' translation).

Within this field of action, policies are defined through specific terminology, such as 'etymology', 'lexicography', 'lexeme', 'text processing systems', which belong to the domain of language studies.

However, while the meaning of some of these words can easily be interpreted by the context, others assume a previous knowledge of the CPLP and its projects in the language area from the audience. One of these terms is VOC – acronym for Orthographic Vocabulary of the Portuguese language (Vocabulário Ortográfico Comum da Língua Portuguesa) – which is a large scale electronic lexical database of spelling, syllabic division, inflection, and other formal properties of Portuguese words in the different countries of the CPLP (FERREIRA; CORREIA; ALMEIDA, 2017). Considering that a clear definition of VOC and its use is not identifiable within the document, policies, as the ones mentioned above, which refer to the use of the Vocabulary may result as being unclear for non-expert readers.

Despite different lengths, the policies outlined in the AP-P share a similar structural and syntactical composition. Interventions to be carried out are often described as a process to be achieved with a verb located at the beginning of the sentence and details on contextual circumstances of the action placed in a secondary position. Due to their initial position, it can be argued that actions occupy a central role in the policy formulation.

From an initial reading of the policies, it is noticeable how actions within the documents mainly take the shape of infinitive verbs (to invest, to encourage, to promote, etc.).

- To invest and insist on organizing scientific events, academic and with the civil society [...];
- To encourage the study and the diffusion of linguistic studies [...];
- To promote circles of debate on Portuguese-language literature [...];
[...]
- To revisit the literature of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries [...];
- To strengthen the teaching of CPLP literature [...]; (CPLP, 2021, p. 4 - 5, authors' translation).

Infinitive verbs differ from other verbs because of the absence of person, number and gender as well as of tense, aspect and mood. In other words, the use of infinitives does not provide agency and time references for the actions outlined, on the contrary it contributes to create a sense of indetermination in the text.

- To invest in training a linguistically responsive teacher;
- To create training programs for Portuguese teachers in the context of university mobility;
- To encourage institutions which employ assessment tools for testing proficiency in Portuguese as a foreign language, to share their experiences with the IILP in order to enable the institute to develop a public information platform on different varieties of certifications; (CPLP, 2021, p. 5, authors' translation).

However, as observable from the examples above, a clear agent is also not identifiable in the other contextual information which takes part in the policy formulation. Policies in the AP-P seem to indeed be deprived from a clear agent and references to where the responsibility of the action lies. When taking a closer look at the AP-Praia document, it is certainly possible to notice that agency for the actions is often omitted. This stimulates doubt and raises questions on where the responsibility of undertaking the policy lies.

Analyzing the policies further, it is possible to notice that a clear reference to the agency of the policy is not the only constitutive information often omitted in the policies formulation.

- To improve technical staff training and invest in the production of resources to develop the inclusion and the diffusion of Portuguese language scientific production in the digital world. (CPLP, 2021, p. 6, authors' translation).

Considering for the purpose of the discussion above mentioned intervention, contextual information on when, where, for how long and with which resources the action will be

implemented also do not appear in the text. Besides questions about agency, new doubts on the potential policy implementation come to light, such as, how to put it into practice? When to start and finish it? Where to address the action to, a country, a community, an institution or in a group of countries within or outside the CPLP?

The scarcity of constitutive information is noticeable in policies throughout the document independently from the thematic under which are listed. This is also observable in policies outlined in the AP-P which retrace interventions stated in previous Action Plans. One of these examples is visible in the 3rd Thematic of the document which refers to Portuguese language teaching in mobility context:

- To promote the training of interpreters for the Portuguese language and increase their number. (CPLP, 2021, p. 5, authors' translation).

Although this policy is similarly structured in all of the previous APs, in the AP-P does not further delineate steps to its achievement. Considering the central role of interpretation and translation in promoting and spreading the language, the policy as structured in the document lacks fundamental information – on how the promotion of the training will take place, the type of training involved, the interpreters' profiles or prerequisites for the training, the place where they will work and/or execute their duties, – to be considered by the reader, whomever that is, as an achievable intervention.

The absence of constitutive and implementing aspects attribute to the policies a generalized nature. The focus on action rather than the contextual circumstances, the use of infinitive verbs in the policy formulation as well as the absence of clear reference to the implementation process contribute towards highlighting only the appearance of the intervention and not its practicality.

Besides producing an effect in the implementation process, the constitutive formulation of the policies in the AP-P do not allow the identification of a common instrument to assess the impact, the outcomes, and overall, the results of the AP. The absence of information on the policy implementation and outcomes impedes the establishment of evaluating and assessing approaches on how the actions have come into action in the real world.

- To create national structures to define and implement language policies that support the pluricentric management of the Portuguese language;
- To invest in the teaching of Portuguese as a second language, a foreign language, a heritage language and a host language; (CPLP, 2021, p. 5, authors' translation).

Drawing on the examples above, it is possible to observe how the generalized character of the action which formulate the policy as well as the generalized and non-quantifiable vocabulary adopted, attribute to the intervention a dubious and immeasurable nature which not only has an impact on its actual realization but also on its assessment.

5. Conclusions

The article aimed to provide a descriptive analysis of the AP-P – a document redacted by the CPLP which outlines policies for the international promotion of the Portuguese language. Due to its normative, official, and international character, the document assumes a central role in the debate on the international Portuguese language promotion (CPLP, s. d., online). The origin of the APs of the CPLP, and, therefore, policies of international Portuguese language promotion introduced, in the academic debates on the spread of the Portuguese language, a new reference of language diffusion. Conceived from an international perspective, AP language policies offer references to a new model of language promotion aimed at achieving language and political objectives not of just one country but a group of countries. For their multilateral character, AP policies, providing new suggestions on which field of action to focus and what possible interventions can be undertaken, foster the discussion on the internationalization of the Portuguese language and how to achieve it.

However, the analysis conducted revealed aspects of the policies formulation which may, in the authors' opinion, produce a refraining impact on their implementation. Specifically, the absence of references to where the responsibility for the action to be undertaken lies as well as the scarcity of detailed information on how, where, and when to implement such action produces a sense of incompleteness in the discourse carried out by the CPLP within the document. Moreover, the lack of constitutive aspects in the policies formulation attribute to the text a general and immeasurable nature which not only influences the policies implementation but also their assessment.

Finally, this article aims to constitute an initial reflection on the AP-P and its textual construction on which further debates on the outcomes of the CPLP in language promotion matters could be instituted. It is the authors' hope to stimulate, with the above discussion, a larger conversation with scholars, within and outside the Portuguese language field, on the role of the CPLP, its policies and their outcomes.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

All authors participated in all stages of the article (conceptualization, formal analysis, research, methodology, revision and editing).

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest in this work.



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