

Literacy in Post-Colonial Cape Verde

Donaldo Macedo

A major pitfall in post-colonial Cape Verde is the almost total lack of understanding of the importance of language in the construction of human subjectivities. Although the literature during the struggle for independence correctly stressed the need to valorize and appreciate our cultural differences as a process for all Capeverdeans to come to voice, the underlying assumption is that the celebration of our culture would take place in Portuguese, a language that may provide most Capeverdeans with the experience of subordination. In this paper I discuss the issue of language and its role in the reconstruction of post-independent Cape Verde, particularly the role of language in the reproduction of Portuguese colonial values through the educational system. In fact, most Capeverdeans who courageously fought against Portuguese colonialism remain, paradoxically, colonized with respect to the question of language. Most Capeverdeans, without saying so, assume that education and other aspects of civic life in Cape Verde can take place effectively through Portuguese only. Such an assumption neglects to appreciate how Portuguese, as a dominant language, even in a somewhat multilingual country, may continue to devalue Capeverdeans and their culture. In other words, one cannot celebrate one's cultural values through the very dominant language that devalues, in many ways, the cultural experiences of different cultural groups. Capeverdean leaders and educators need to understand that language is the only means through which one comes to consciousness. In this article I provide a critical analysis of the politics of language and its role in the reproduction of colonial values in Cape Verde. The reproduction of the colonial values also prevent even progressive Capeverdeans from accepting and embracing

ing the virtues of bilingual education as eloquently argued by Zeynep F. Beykont, among others.

With the exception of a small number of critical thinkers, most Capeverdeans have simply failed to undertake the necessary critical analysis of the politics of language and its role in education and civic life. The dearth of critical work concerning the ideological construction of language and its cultural manifestation is due, primarily, to two fundamental factors: 1) the teaching of Portuguese as an end in itself and 2) the lack of political clarity among Capeverdean leaders who, in turn, prevent (sometimes unknowingly) even the most committed Capeverdean educators from understanding the neo-colonial language policy that informs and shapes educational programs in Cape Verde.

Although the political rhetoric right after the independence promised to give Capeverdeans cultural voice, most political leaders, particularly those educated in colonial schools, were unable to fracture the colonial yoke as far as the issue of language was concerned. These leaders failed to realize that their national goal to achieve cultural independence from Portugal was insidiously being undermined by a process of valorizing the Capeverdean culture through the use of Portuguese, a language that historically served as a weapon to devalue, demonize, and dehumanize Capeverdeans. That is, by refusing to totally allow the Capeverdeans's minds to be decolonized, these leaders understood little about how the Portuguese language, as a colonial language, is able to subordinate and alienate members of the Capeverdean culture who are struggling to have a cultural voice. In addition, the use of Portuguese as the dominant language in cultural, educational, and civic life in Cape Verde not only eclipses real opportunities for the development of cultural independence and solidarity but it also hides the privilege and paternalism prevalent among the *petit bourgeoisie* class responsible for language and educational policies. It is the same paternalism that is often encoded as: "We need to give Capeverdeans voice." First of all, we need to become keenly aware that voice is not something to be given by those in power. In addition, voice cannot be given in the very Portuguese language that keeps the Capeverdean language submerged. Voice requires struggle and the understanding of both possibilities and limitations. The most leaders and educators can do is to create structures that would enable submerged voices to emerge. It is not a gift. Voice is a human right. It is a democratic right.

Against a landscape of increased neo-colonialism in Cape Verde, I doubt very much that the continued use of Portuguese only in education and other

important aspects of civic life will enable Capeverdeans to critically understand how the imposed use of Portuguese together with neo-liberal policies construct, shape, and maintain the cruel reality of neo-colonial dependence. I also doubt that the present educational experience in Cape Verde can equip Capeverdeans with the necessary critical tools to understand how language is often used to ideologically construct realities that veil the raw racism that devalue, disconfirm, and poison other cultural identities. Even within the progressive sector of the Capeverdean society, most individuals fail to understand the neo-colonialist ideology that informs the language debate in Cape Verde to the extent that leaders and educators almost always structure their arguments within a reductionistic view of language.

If we analyze closely the ideology that informs and shapes the present debate over the role of the Capeverdean language in education, we can begin to see and understand that the ideological principles that sustain the Capeverdean language debate are consonant with the structures and mechanisms of a colonial ideology designed to devalue the cultural capital and values of the colonized.

It is only through a full understanding of our colonial legacy that we can begin to comprehend the complexity of our bilingualism in Cape Verde. For most linguistic subordinate speakers in colonized territories, their bilingualism is not characterized by the ability to speak two languages. There is a radical difference between a dominant speaker learning a second language and a subordinate speaker acquiring the dominant language. While the former involves the addition of a second language to one's linguistic repertoire, the latter usually provides the subordinate speaker with the experience of subordination in speaking both his or her language which is devalued by the dominant values and the dominant language that he or she has learned, often under coercive conditions. Both the colonized context and the asymmetrical power relations with respect to language use in Cape Verde create, on the one hand, a form of forced bilingualism and, on the other, what Albert Memmi appropriately calls a linguistic drama:

In the colonial context, bilingualism is necessary. It is a condition for all culture, all communication and all progress. But while the colonial bilingualist is saved from being walled in, he suffers a cultural catastrophe which is never completely overcome. The difference between native language and cultural language is not peculiar to the colonized, but colonial bilingualism cannot be compared to just any linguis-

tic dualism. Possession of two languages is not merely a matter of having two tools, but actually means participation in two physical and cultural realms. Here, the two worlds symbolized and conveyed by the two tongues are in conflict; they are those of the colonizer and the colonized.

Furthermore, the colonized's mother tongue, that which is sustained by his feelings, emotions, and dreams, that in which his tenderness and wonder are expressed, thus that which holds the greatest emotional impact, is precisely the one which is the least valued. It has no stature in the country or in the concept of peoples. If he wants to obtain a job, make a place for himself, exist in the community and the world, he must first bow to the language of his masters. In the linguistic conflict within the colonized, his mother tongue is that which is crushed. He himself sets about discarding this infirm language, hiding it from the sight of strangers. In short, colonial bilingualism is neither a purely bilingual situation, in which an indigenous tongue coexists with a purist's language (both belonging to the same world of feeling), nor a simple polyglot richness benefiting from an extra but relatively neuter alphabet; it is a linguistic drama. (107)

Unfortunately, the tragedy of our Capeverdean linguistic drama is ill understood by policy makers, particularly among literacy experts who are responsible for the education of those who are often victims of their policies. Within the last decade, literacy has taken on new importance as an issue among educators. Sadly, the debate that has emerged has tended to recycle old assumptions and values regarding the meaning and usefulness of literacy. The notion that literacy is simply a matter of learning the standard language still informs the vast majority of literacy programs, and manifests its logic in the renewed emphasis on technical reading and writing skills.

I want to propose in this article that literacy cannot be viewed as simply the development of skills aimed at acquiring the dominant standard language. This view sustains a notion of ideology that systematically disconfirms rather than makes meaningful the cultural experiences of the subordinate linguistic groups who are, by and large, the objects of its policies. For the notion of literacy to become meaningful, it has to be situated within a theory of cultural production and viewed as an integral part of the way in which people produce, transform, and reproduce meaning. Literacy must be seen as a medium that constitutes and affirms the historical and existential moments of lived experience that produce a subordinate or a lived culture. Hence, it is an eminently political phenomenon, and it must be analyzed within the con-

text of a theory of power relations and an understanding of social and cultural reproduction and production. By “cultural reproduction” I refer to collective experiences that function in the interest of the colonizer, rather than in the interest of the oppressed groups that are the object of its policies. I use “cultural production” to refer to specific groups of people producing, mediating, and confirming the mutual ideological elements that emerge from and reaffirm their daily lived experiences. In this case, such experiences are rooted in the interests of individual and collective self-determination.

This theoretical posture underlies my examination of how the public school systems in the Republic of Cape Verde have developed educational policies aimed at stamping out a very high illiteracy rate inherited from colonialist Portugal. These policies are designed to eradicate the colonial educational legacy, which had as its major tenet the total de-Africanization of Capeverdeans. As Paulo Freire succinctly points out, colonial education

was discriminatory, mediocre, and based on verbalism. It could not contribute anything to national reconstruction because it was not constituted for this purpose.[...] Schooling was antidemocratic in its methods, in its content, and in its objectives. Divorced from the reality of the country, it was, for this very reason, a school for a minority, and thus against the majority. (13-14)

Before the independence of Cape Verde in 1975, schools functioned as political sites in which class, gender, and racial inequities were both produced and reproduced. In essence, the colonial educational structure seemed to inculcate the Capeverdean natives with myths and beliefs which denied and belittled their lived experiences, their history, their culture, and their language. The schools were seen as purifying fountains where Capeverdeans could be saved from their deep-rooted ignorance, their “savage” culture, and their bastardized language which, according to some Portuguese scholars, was a corrupted form of Portuguese “without grammatical rules (they can’t ever be applied)” (Caetano 349). Consequently, as Freire points out, “[t]his system could not help but reproduce in children and youth the profile that the colonial ideology itself had created for them, namely that of inferior beings, lacking in all ability” (14).

On the one hand, schooling in Cape Verde served the purpose of deculturating the natives while on the other hand, it acculturated them into a predefined colonial model. Schools in this mold functioned “as part of an

ideological state apparatus designed to secure the ideological and social reproduction of capital and its institutions whose interests are rooted in the dynamics of capital accumulation and the reproduction of the labor force" (Giroux). This educated labor force in Cape Verde was composed mainly of low-level functionaries whose major tasks were the promotion and maintenance of the status quo. Their role took on a new and important dimension when they were used as intermediaries to further colonize other Portuguese possessions in Africa. Thus, colonial schools were successful to the extent that they created a *petit-bourgeois* class of functionaries who had internalized the belief that they had become "white" or "black with white souls," and were therefore superior to Africans who still practiced what was viewed as barbaric culture.

The assimilation process in Cape Verde penetrated the deepest level of consciousness, especially in the bourgeoisie class. For instance, with respect to becoming "white," I am reminded of an anecdote about a black Capeverdean so preoccupied with his blackness that he paid a well-respected white Capeverdean to issue him a decree proclaiming him white. The man jokingly wrote for him on a piece of paper *Dja'n branco dja*, meaning *I have thereby been declared white*.

After independence and in the reconstruction of a new society in Cape Verde, schools have assumed as their major task the "decolonization of mentality," as it is termed by Aristides Pereira, and which Amílcar Cabral called the "re-Africanization of mentality." It is clear that both Pereira and Cabral were well aware of the need to create a school system in which a new mentality cleansed of all vestiges of colonialism would be formulated: a school system that would allow Capeverdeans to appropriate their history, their culture, and their language. A school system where, according to Freire

It was imperative to reformulate the programs of geography, history and the Portuguese language, changing all the reading texts that were so heavily impregnated with colonialist ideology. It was an absolute priority that [...] students should study their own geography and not that of Portugal, the inlets of the sea and not Rio Tejo. It was urgent that they study their history, the history of the resistance of their people to the invader and the struggle for their liberation which gave them back the right to make their own history, and not the history of the kings of Portugal and the intrigues of the court. (20)

Freire's proposal to incorporate a radical pedagogy in Capeverdean schools has met a lukewarm reception in Cape Verde. I want to argue that the suspi-

cion of Capeverdean educators is deeply rooted in the language issue (Capeverdean vs. Portuguese) and has led to the creation of a neo-colonialist literacy campaign under the superficially radical slogan of eliminating illiteracy in Cape Verde. The difficulties of reappropriating Capeverdean culture have been magnified by the fact that the means for such struggle has been the language of the colonizers. I want to argue also that the present literacy campaign in Cape Verde concerns itself mainly with the creation of functional literates in the Portuguese language. No longer based on the cultural capital of subordinate Capeverdeans, the program has fallen prey to positivistic and instrumental approaches to literacy concerned mainly with the mechanical acquisition of Portuguese language skills (Bourdieu and Passeron).

Before my discussion of the politics of an emancipatory literacy program in Cape Verde, I want to discuss the various approaches to literacy. First, I will briefly discuss those approaches which are derived from a positivistic school and are linked to the process of cultural reproduction. Then, I will analyze the role of language in the reproduction process. Finally, I will argue that the only literacy approach which would be consistent with the construction of a new Capeverdean society is one rooted in the dynamics of cultural production and informed by a radical pedagogy. That is, the literacy program that is needed is one that will affirm and allow Capeverdeans to re-create their history, culture, and language and that will, at the same time, help lead those assimilated Capeverdeans who perceive themselves to be captive to the colonial ideology to "commit class suicide" (Freire).

APPROACHES TO LITERACY

Almost without exception, traditional approaches to literacy have been deeply *ingrained* in a positivistic method of inquiry. In effect this has resulted in an epistemological stance in which scientific rigor and methodological refinement are celebrated while "theory and knowledge are subordinated to the imperatives of efficiency and technical mastery, and history is reduced to a minor footnote in the priorities of 'empirical' scientific inquiry" (Giroux). In general, this approach abstracts methodological issues from their ideological contexts and consequently ignores the interrelationship between the socio-political structures of a society and the act of reading. In part, the exclusion of social and political dimensions from the practice of reading gives rise to an ideology of cultural reproduction, one which views readers as "objects." As Freire has aptly stated, it is "as though their conscious bodies were simply

empty, waiting to be flied by that word" from the teacher (72). Although it is important to analyze how ideologies inform various reading traditions, in this essay I will limit my discussion to a brief analysis of the most important approaches to literacy, linking them to either cultural reproduction or cultural production.

The Academic Approach to Reading

The purpose assigned to reading in the academic tradition is two-fold. First, the rationale for this approach "derives from classical definitions of the well educated man-thoroughly grounded in the classics, articulate in spoken and written expression, actively engaged in intellectual pursuits" (Walmsley 78). This approach to reading has primarily served the interests of the elite classes. In this case, reading is viewed as the acquisition of predefined forms of knowledge, and is organized around the study of Latin and Greek amid the mastery of the great classical works. Second, since it would be unrealistic to expect the vast majority of society to meet such high standards, reading was redefined as the acquisition of reading skills, decoding skills, vocabulary development, and so on. This second rationale served to legitimize a dual approach to reading: one level for the ruling class and another for the dispossessed majority. According to Giroux "this second notion is geared primarily to working class students whose cultural capital is considered less compatible, and thus inferior in terms of complexity and value, with the knowledge and values of the dominant class." This two-fold academic approach to reading is inherently alienating in nature. On the one hand, it ignores the life experience, the history, and the language practice of students. On the other hand, it overemphasizes the mastery and understanding of classical literature and the use of literary materials as "vehicles for exercises in comprehension (literal and interpretative), vocabulary development and word identification skills" (Walmsley 80). Thus, literacy in this sense is stripped of its socio-political dimensions; it functions, in fact, to reproduce dominant values and meaning. It does not contribute in any meaningful way to the appropriation of working-class history, culture, and language.

The Utilitarian Approach to Reading

The major goal of the utilitarian approach is to produce readers who meet the basic reading requirements of contemporary society. In spite of its progressive appeal, such an approach emphasizes the mechanical learning of reading

skills while sacrificing the critical analysis of the social and political order which generates the need for reading in the first place. This position has led to the development of "functional literates," groomed primarily to meet the requirements of our ever more complex technological society. Such a view is not simply characteristic of the advanced industrialized countries of the West; even within the Third World, utilitarian literacy has been championed as a vehicle for economic betterment, access to jobs, and increase of the productivity level. As it is clearly stated by UNESCO,

literacy programs should preferably be linked with economic priorities
[. . . They] must impart not only reading and writing, but also professional and technical knowledge, thereby leading to a fuller participation of adults in economic life. (97)

This notion of literacy has been enthusiastically incorporated as a major goal by the Back-to-Basics proponents of reading. It has also contributed to the development of nearly packaged reading programs which are presented as the solution to difficulties students experience in reading job application forms, tax forms, advertisement literature, sales catalogs, labels, and the like. In general, the utilitarian approach views literacy as meeting the basic reading demand of an industrialized society. As Giroux points out, literacy within this perspective is geared to make adults more productive workers and citizens within a given society. In spite of its appeal to economic mobility, functional literacy reduces the concept of literacy and the pedagogy in which it is suited to the pragmatic requirements of capital; consequently, the notions of critical thinking, culture and power disappear under the imperatives of the labor process and the need for capital accumulation.

Cognitive Development Approach to Reading

While the academic and utilitarian approaches to reading emphasize the mastery of reading skills and view the readers as "objects," the cognitive development model stresses the construction of meaning whereby readers engage in a dialectical interaction between themselves and the objective world. Although the acquisition of literacy skills is viewed as an important task in this approach, the salient feature is how people construct meaning through problem-solving processes. Comprehension of the text is relegated to a position of lesser importance in favor of the development of new cognitive struc-

tures which can enable students to move from simple to highly complex reading tasks. This reading process is highly influenced by the early work of John Dewey and has been shaped in terms of the development of Piagetian cognitive structures. Under the cognitive development model, reading is seen as an intellectual process, "through a series of fixed, value-free, and universal stages of development" (Walmsley 82). The cognitive development model thus avoids criticism of the academic and utilitarian views of reading and fails to consider the content of what is read. Instead, it emphasizes a process which allows students to analyze and critique issues raised in the text with an increasing level of complexity. This approach, however, is rarely concerned with questions of cultural reproduction. Since students's cultural capital, i.e., their life experience, history, and language, is ignored, they are rarely able to engage "through critical reflection, regarding their own practical experience and the ends that motivate them in order, in the end, to organize the findings, and thus to replace mere opinion about facts with an increasingly rigorous understanding of their significance" (Freire 25).

The Romantic Approach to Reading

Like the cognitive development model, the romantic approach is based on an interactionist approach with a major focus on the construction of meaning; however, the romantic approach views meaning as being generated by the reader and not occurring in the interaction between reader and author via text. The romantic mode greatly emphasizes the affective and sees reading as the fulfillment of self and a joyful experience. One writer praises the intimate reliving of fresh views of personality and life implicit in the work of literature; the pleasure and release of tensions that may flow from such an experience ... the deepening and broadening of sensitivity to the sensuous quality and emotional impact of day-to-day living (Rosenblatt 37-38).

In essence, the romantic approach to reading presents a counterpoint to the authoritarian modes of pedagogy which view readers as "objects." However, this seemingly liberal approach to literacy fails to make problematic class conflict, gender, or racial inequalities. Furthermore, the romantic model completely ignores the cultural capital of subordinate groups and assumes that all people have the same access to reading, or that reading is part of the cultural capital of all people. This failure to address questions of cultural capital or various structural inequalities means that the romantic model tends to reproduce the cultural capital of the dominant class, to which reading is intimately

tied. It is presumptuous and naive to expect a student from the working class, confronted and victimized by myriad disadvantages, to find joy and self-affirmation through reading alone. But more important is the failure of the romantic tradition to link reading to the asymmetrical relations of power within the dominant society, relations of power that not only define and legitimize certain approaches to reading but also disempower certain groups by excluding them from such a process.

I have argued thus far that all of these approaches to literacy have failed to provide a theoretical model for empowering historical agents with the logic of individual and collective self-determination. While these approaches may differ in their basic assumptions about literacy, they all share one common feature: they all ignore the role of language as a major force in the construction of human subjectivities. That is, they ignore the way in which language may either confirm or disconfirm the life histories and experiences of the people who use it. This becomes more clear in my analysis of the role of language in Capeverdean literacy programs.

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN CAPEVERDEAN LITERACY

The Capeverdean literacy programs have been plagued by constant debate over whether the language of instruction should be the native Capeverdean language or the official Portuguese language. Such debate, however, hides issues of a more serious nature which are rarely raised. This is in line with Antonio Gramsci's argument that,

Each time that in one way or another, the question of language comes to the fore, that signifies that a series of other problems is about to emerge, the formation and enlarging of the ruling class, the necessity to establish more "intimate" and sure relations between the ruling groups and the national popular masses, that is, the reorganization of cultural hegemony. (52)

Gramsci's argument illuminates the issue underlying the debates over language in Cape Verde, where there is still no agreement as to whether the native language is really just a dialect of Portuguese. Capeverdean educators repeatedly use the lack of orthographic uniformity for the Capeverdean language to justify their present policy of using Portuguese as the only medium of reading instruction. They raise the question of which dialect such an orthography should be based on. However, the most common argument is

that Portuguese language has international status and therefore guarantees upward mobility for the Portuguese-educated Capeverdeans.

The sad reality is that while education in Portuguese provides access to positions of political and economic power for the high echelon of Capeverdean society, it screens out the majority of the masses who fail to learn Portuguese well enough to acquire the necessary literacy level for social, economic, and political advancement. By offering a literacy program conducted in the language of the colonizers with the aim of reappropriating the Capeverdean culture, these educators have, in fact, developed new manipulative strategies that support the maintenance of Portuguese cultural dominance. What is hidden in the language debate in Cape Verde is possibly a resistance to re-Africanization, or perhaps a subtle refusal on the part of the assimilated Capeverdeans to "commit class suicide."

The pedagogical and political implications of using Portuguese as the only medium of instruction in Capeverdean literacy programs are far-reaching and yet largely ignored. The reading programs in Cape Verde often contradict a fundamental principle of reading, namely that students learn to read faster and with better comprehension when taught in their native tongue. The immediate recognition of familiar words and experiences enhances the development of a positive self-concept in children who are somewhat insecure about the status of their language and culture. For this reason, and to be consistent with the plan to construct a new society in Cape Verde free from vestiges of colonialism, a Capeverdean literacy program should be based on the rationale that such a program must be rooted in the cultural capital of subordinate Capeverdeans and have as its point of departure the Capeverdean language.

Capeverdean educators must develop radical pedagogical structures which provide students with the opportunity to use their own reality as a basis of literacy. This includes, obviously, the Capeverdean language they bring to the classroom. To do otherwise is to deny Capeverdean students the rights that lie at the core of the notion of an emancipatory literacy. The failure to base a literacy program on the Capeverdean language means that oppositional forces can neutralize the efforts of Capeverdean educators and political leaders to achieve decolonization. Capeverdean educators and political leaders must recognize that

Language is inevitably one of the major preoccupations of a society which, liberating itself from colonialism and refusing to be drawn into neo-colonialism searches

for its own recreation. In the struggle to recreate a society, the reconquest by the people of their own world becomes a fundamental factor. (Kenneth)

It is of paramount importance that the incorporation of the Capeverdean language as the primary language of instruction in literacy be given top priority. It is through their own language that Capeverdeans will be able to reconstruct their history and their culture.

The debate over whether the Capeverdean language is a dialect of Portuguese, a simplification of Portuguese, or a valid language, and whether it is a restricted or elaborated language, points to the issue of whether Portuguese is in fact a superior language. In a more important sense these linguistic categories rest on the technical question of whether the Capeverdean language is a valid and rule-governed system. Despite synchronic and diachronic analyses of the Capeverdean language (Macedo, "Conceptualizing," "Capeverdean") the fact still remains that the Capeverdean language continues in a stigmatized and subordinate position. I want to argue that the Capeverdean language has to be understood within the theoretical framework that generates it. Put another way, the ultimate meaning and value of the Capeverdean language are not to be found by determining how systematic and rule-governed it is. We know that already. Its real meaning has to be understood through the assumptions that govern it, and it has to be understood via the social, political, and ideological relations to which it points. Generally speaking, the issue of systematicness and validity often hides the true role of language in the maintenance of the values and interests of the dominant class. In other words, the issue of systematicness and validity becomes a mask that obfuscates questions about the social, political, and ideological order within which the Capeverdean language exists.

If an emancipatory literacy program is to be developed in Cape Verde, in which readers become "subjects" rather than "objects," Capeverdean educators must understand the productive quality of language. Donald puts it this way:

I take language to be productive rather than reflective of social reality. This means calling into question the assumption that we, as speaking subjects, simply use language to organize and express our ideas and experiences. On the contrary, language is one of the most important social practices through which we come to experience ourselves as subjects [...]. My point here is that once we get beyond the idea of language as no more than a medium of communication, as a tool equally

and neutrally available to all parties in cultural exchanges, then we can begin to examine language both as a practice of signification and also as a site for cultural struggle and as a mechanism which produces antagonistic relations between different social groups. (44)

It is to the antagonistic relationship between the Capeverdean and Portuguese speakers that I want to turn now. The antagonistic nature of the Capeverdean language has never been fully explored. In order to more clearly discuss this issue of antagonism, I will use Donald's distinction between *oppressed* language and *repressed* language. Using Donald's categories, the "negative" way of posing the Capeverdean language question is to view it in terms of *oppression*—that is, seeing the Capeverdean language as "lacking" the Portuguese features which usually serve as a point of reference for the Capeverdean language. By far the most common questions concerning the Capeverdean language are posed from the *oppression* perspective. The alternative view of the Capeverdean language is that it is *repressed* in the Portuguese language. In this view, Capeverdean as a repressed language could, if spoken, challenge the privileged Portuguese linguistic dominance. Capeverdean educators have failed to recognize the "positive" promise and antagonistic nature of the Capeverdean language. It is precisely on these dimensions that educators must concentrate to bring forth an emancipatory literacy program which will demystify the Portuguese language and the old assumptions about its inherent superiority. Capeverdean educators must develop an emancipatory literacy program informed by a radical pedagogy so that the Capeverdean language will cease to provide its speakers the experience of subordination and, moreover, may be brandished as a weapon of resistance to the dominance of the Portuguese language.

EMANCIPATORY LITERACY IN CAPE VERDE

In maintaining a certain coherence with the revolutionary plan to reconstruct a new society in Cape Verde, Capeverdean educators and political leaders saw the need to create a new school grounded in "a new educational praxis, expressing different concepts of education consonant with the plan for the society as a whole" (Freire 13). In order for this to happen, the first step was to identify the objectives of the inherited colonial education. Next, it was necessary to analyze how the methods used by the colonial schools functioned, legitimizing the dominant values and meanings, and at the same time

disconfirming the history, culture, and language practices of the majority of Capeverdeans. The new school, so it was argued, must also be informed by a radical pedagogy, which would make “concrete such values as solidarity, social responsibility, creativity, discipline in the service of the common good, vigilance and critical spirit—values by which PAIGC has been forged through the whole liberation process” (Freire 43).

An important feature of the new educational plan in post-independence Cape Verde was the development of a literacy program rooted in an emancipatory ideology, where readers become “subjects” rather than mere “objects.” The new literacy program needed to move away from traditional approaches which emphasize the acquisition of mechanical skills while divorcing reading from its ideological and historical contexts. In attempting to meet this goal, it purposely rejected the conservative principles embedded in the approaches to literacy I have discussed previously. Unfortunately, the new literacy program unknowingly reproduced one common feature of those approaches by ignoring the important relation between language and the cultural capital of the people whom the literacy program was aimed at. The result has been the development of a literacy campaign whose basic assumptions are at odds with the revolutionary spirit that launched it. The new literacy program was largely based on Freire’s notion of emancipatory literacy in which literacy is viewed “as one of the major vehicles by which ‘oppressed’ people are able to participate in the sociohistorical transformation of their society” (Walmsley 84). In this view, literacy programs should be tied not only to mechanical learning of reading skills but, additionally, to a critical understanding of the overall goals for national reconstruction. Thus, the readers’s development of a critical comprehension of the text, and the sociohistorical context to which it refers, become an important factor in Freire’s notion of literacy. As he points out,

The act of learning to read and write, in this instance, is a creative act that involves a critical comprehension of reality. The knowledge of earlier knowledge, gained by the learners as a result of analyzing praxis in its social context, opens to them the possibility of new knowledge. The new knowledge, reveals the reason for being behind the facts, thus demythologizing the false interpretations of these same facts. And so, there is now no more separation between thought-language and objective reality. The reading of a text now demands a reading within the social context to which it refers. (Freire 24)

Literacy, in this sense, is grounded in a critical reflection on the cultural capital of the oppressed. It becomes a vehicle by which the oppressed are equipped with the necessary tools to reappropriate their history, culture, and language practices. It is, thus, a way to enable the oppressed to reclaim "those historical and existential experiences that are devalued in everyday life by the dominant culture [...] in order to be both validated and critically understood" (Giroux).

The theories underlying Freire's emancipatory literacy have been, in principle, wholeheartedly embraced by Capeverdean educators. However, I must argue that, in practice, the middle class, especially teachers trained by the colonial schools, has not been able to play a radical pedagogical role. These educators have failed to analyze and understand the ways in which the colonizers used the Portuguese language to maintain class division, thereby keeping subordinate Capeverdeans in their proper place. I am reminded now of a friend in Cape Verde who, having intellectually embraced the revolutionary cause, is unable to perceive himself as still being emotionally "captive" to the colonial ideology. But when I asked him which language he most often uses in the office, he quickly answered, "Portuguese, of course—it is the only way to keep my subordinates in their place. If I speak Capeverdean, they don't respect me."

This view of language in Cape Verde is illustrative of the extent to which Capeverdeans are held "captive" by the dominant ideology, which devalues their own language. Not surprisingly, many progressive educators and leaders fail to recognize and understand the importance of their native language in the development of an emancipatory literacy. As I have mentioned before, literacy programs in Cape Verde are conducted in Portuguese, the language of the colonizer. The continued use of Portuguese as the sole vehicle of literacy in Cape Verde will only guarantee that the future leaders will be the sons and daughters of the ruling class.

In essence, progressive educators sometimes not only fail to recognize the positive promise of the students's language, but they systematically undermine the principles of an emancipatory literacy by conducting literacy programs in the dominant colonial language. The result is that the learning of reading skills in the dominant colonial language will not enable subordinate students to acquire the critical tools "to awaken and liberate them from their mystified and distorted view of the world" (226). Educators must understand the all-encompassing role that the dominant colonial language has played in this mystification and distortion process. They must also recognize the antagonistic nature of the subordinate language and its potential chal-

lenge to the mystification of the dominant colonial language superiority. Finally, they must develop a literacy program based on the theory of cultural production. In other words, subordinate students must become actors in the reconstruction process of a new society.

Literacy can only be emancipatory and critical to the extent that it is conducted in the language of the people. It is through the native language that students name their world and begin to establish a dialectical relationship with the dominant class in the process of transforming the social and political structures that imprison them in their silenced culture. Thus, a person is literate to the extent that he or she is able to use language for social and political reconstruction. The use of the dominant colonial language only (Portuguese in the case of Cape Verde) weakens the possibilities for subordinate students to engage in dialectical encounters with the dominant class. Literacy conducted in the dominant colonial language empowers the ruling class by sustaining the status quo. This elite model of education creates intellectualists and technocrats rather than intellectuals. In short, literacy conducted in Portuguese only in Cape Verde is alienating to subordinate Capeverdean students, since it denies them the fundamental tools for reflection, critical thinking, and social interaction. Without the cultivation of the Capeverdean language, and robbed of the opportunity for reflection and critical thinking, subordinate Capeverdean students find themselves unable to re-create their culture and history. Without the reappropriation of their cultural capital, which includes the Capeverdean language, the reconstruction of a new society in Cape Verde free from the yoke of colonialism can hardly be a reality.

Works Cited

- Beykont, Zeynep F., ed. *Lifting Every Voice: Pedagogy and Politics of Bilingualism*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Publishing Group, 2000.
- Bourdieu, Pierre and Jean-Claude Passeron. *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1977.
- Caetano, J. *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia*. 3rd ser., n.d.: n. pag.
- Donald, J. *Language, Literacy and Schooling*. London: Open University Press, 1982.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy in Process*. New York: Seabury Press, 1978.
- Giroux, Henry A. *Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition*. South Hadley, Mass.: J.E. Bergin Publishers, 2000.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from Prison Notebooks*. Ed. and trans. Quinten Hoare Geoffrey Smith. New York: International Publishers, 1971.

- Kenneth, John. "The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu." *Educational Review* 25.3 (1973): 237-249.
- Macedo, Donaldo. "Conceptualizing Bilingual Education for Capeverdeans in the United States." Second National Portuguese Conference, Providence, Rhode Island, 1977.
- Macedo, Donaldo. "Capeverdean Orthography Development in the United States." In *National Language Planning and Treatment*. Ed. Richard Wood. Texas: University of Texas Press, 1982. n. pag.
- Memmi, Albert. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Trans. Howard Greenfeld. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.
- Rosenblatt, L. "The Enriching Values of Reading." In *Reading in an Age of Mass Communication*. Ed. William S. Gray. New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1949. n. pag.
- UNESCO. *An Asian Model of Educational Development: Perspectives for 1965-1980*. Paris: UNESCO, 1966.
- Walmsley, Shawn A. "On the Purpose and Content of Secondary Reading Programs: Educational Ideological Perspectives." *Curriculum Inquiry* 11.1 (1981): 73-93.

Donaldo Macedo is professor of English and Distinguished Professor of Liberal Arts and Education at the University of Massachusetts Boston. He has published extensively in the areas of linguistics, critical literacy, and bilingual and multicultural education. His publications include *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World* (with Paulo Freire, 1987), *Literacies of Power: What Americans Are Not Allowed to Know* (1994), *Chomsky on Miseducation* (with Noam Chomsky, 2000) and *Ideology Matters* (co-authored with Paulo Freire, forthcoming). E-mail: donaldo.macedo@umab.edu