THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE AREA IN SECONDARY EDUCATION CUR-RICULUM:
CONTEMPORARY PROCESSES OF RECONFIGURATION

AN ESSAY

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Abstract. In Portugal, the last decade has been characterised by important reforms in the educational system particularly of secondary education. The Portuguese Language Area, comprising different subjects, was submitted to deep changes concerning its aims, content, methodologies, and assessment. In this paper, it is my purpose to analyse some of those changes, focusing on their underlying principles, their main features and their impact both in the pedagogic field and in the public sphere. I consider firstly the political and educational circumstances in which the reconfiguration of the Portuguese Language Area in secondary education took place. Then, I proceed to describe the main features of the official pedagogic discourse that gives expression to such reconfiguration through an examination of the Portuguese Lan-

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guage Syllabus. After that, school textbooks are focused on, in order to understand how they interpret the official discourse and how they conceive pedagogic practice. Subsequently, as a means to capture continuities and discrepancies between pedagogic and public spheres, the analysis deals with a *corpus* of texts from the media that give voice to positions concerning the teaching of Portuguese. In the last section, according to the analysis previously developed, I discuss the tensions that lie across the Portuguese Language Area and that will probably regulate the directions of its development.

Dutch. Samenvatting [translation Tanja Janssen].
In Portugal zijn er de laatste tien jaar belangrijke vernieuwingen doorgevoerd in het onderwijssysteem, met name in het secundair onderwijs. Het Gebied Portugese Taal, dat verschillende vakonderdelen omvat, onderging grote veranderingen met betrekking tot doelen, inhouden, didactiek, en beoordeling. In deze bijdrage analyseer ik enkele van deze veranderingen, waarbij ik mij richt op de onderliggende principes, hun hoofdkenmerken en hun impact zowel binnen als buiten de school. Eerst ga ik in op de politieke omstandigheden en op de onderwijssituatie waarbinnen de hervorming van het Gebied Portugese Taal in het secundair onderwijs plaatsvond. Vervolgens beschrijf ik de hoofdkenmerken van het officiële onderwijs discourse dat uiting geeft aan de hervorming, door de Portugese Taal Syllabus te beschouwen. Daarna ga ik in op schoolboeken, om te zien hoe zij de officiële richtlijnen interpreteren en hoe zij de onderwijspraktijk opvatten. Om de overeenkomsten en verschillen tussen de onderwijssfeer en de openbare sfeer in kaart te brengen, analyseer ik een verzameling teksten uit de media die handelen over het onderwijs Portugees. In de laatste paragraaf bespreek ik de spanningen die ten grondslag liggen aan het Gebied Portugese Taal en die waarschijnlijk richtinggevend zullen zijn voor de ontwikkeling van het Gebied.

French. Résumé. [Translation Laurence Pasa]
Au Portugal, la dernière décennie a été marquée par des réformes importantes du système éducatif, en particulier au secondaire. Le domaine de la langue, comportant différents aspects, a été soumis à de profonds changements quant à ses objectifs, son contenu, ses méthodes, et son évaluation.
Mon but est ici d'analyser certains de ces changements, en se centrant sur leurs fondements, leurs caractéristiques essentielles et leur impact dans le champ de la pédagogie et dans la sphère publique.
Je considère dans un premier temps les circonstances politiques et éducatives dans lesquelles la reconfiguration de l'enseignement du portugais au secondaire a eu lieu. Puis, je procède à une description des principales caractéristiques du discours pédagogique officiel qui exprime une telle reconfiguration par un examen du programme de portugais. Ensuite, des manuels sont examinés afin de comprendre comment ils interprètent le discours officiel et comment ils conçoivent la pratique pédagogique. Puis, pour saisir les continuités et des anomalies entre les sphères pédagogique et publique, un corpus de textes journalistiques qui expriment les diverses positions relatives à l'enseignement du portugais est analysé. Enfin, à partir de l'analyse précédemment développée, je discute les tensions liées à l'enseignement du portugais et qui détermineront probablement son développement.

German. Zusammenfassung. [Translation Irene Pieper].
Der Bereich Portugiesisch im Curriculum für die Sekundarstufe: Gegenwärtige Rekonfigurationsprozesse
In Portugal war das letzte Jahrzehnt durch wichtige Reformen im Erziehungssystem besonders der Sekundarstufe geprägt. Der Bereich Portugiesische Sprache, der unterschiedliche Fächer umfasst, erfuhr starke Veränderungen in den Bereichen, Ziele, Inhalte, Methodologie und Assessment.
In diesem Beitrag analysiere ich einige dieser Veränderungen. Ich betrachte dabei vor allem die dem Prozess zugrunde liegenden Prinzipien, ihre Hauptcharakteristika und ihren Einfluss auf den pädagogischen Bereich und die Öffentlichkeit.
Zunächst rekonstruiere ich den politischen und pädagogisch-didaktischen Kontext, in dem die Rekonfiguration des Bereichs ‚Portugiesische Sprache in der Sekundarstufe' zu begreifen ist. Anschließend stelle ich mittels einer Analyse des Curriculums Portugiesische Sprache die Hauptcharakteristika des offiziellen pädagogischen Diskurses, die einem solchen Rekonfigurationsprozess Ausdruck verleihen, dar. Anschließend gehe ich der Frage nach, wie aktuelle Lehrwerke den offiziellen Diskurs interpretieren und pädagogische Praxis begreifen. Ich sichte dann einige Medienbeiträge, die Positionen zum Unterricht des Portugiesischen formulieren, um Kontinuitäten und Diskrepanzen zwischen pädagogisch-didaktischer und öffentlicher Sphäre aufzeigen zu können. Im abschließenden Teil diskutiere ich auf dieser Grundlage die Spannungen, die vermutlich die Entwicklung des Bereichs Portugiesische Sprache regulieren werden.

Polish. Streszczenie [translation Elżbieta Awramiuk]

W Portugalii ostatnią dekadę charakteryzują ważne reformy systemu edukacyjnego, szczególnie szkół średnich. Dziedzina języka portugalskiego, obejmująca różne przedmioty, została poddana głębokim zmianom, obejmującym jej cele, treści, metodologię oraz ocenianie. W niniejszym artykule pragnę zaprezentować niektóre z tych zmian, koncentrując się na na leżących u ich źródeł przyczynach, ich głównych wyznacznikach oraz na ich wpływie na pedagogikę i sferę publiczną. Najpierw rozważam polityczne i edukacyjne okoliczności, w których miała miejsce rekonfiguracja języka portugalskiego w szkole średniej. Następnie przechodzę do opisu głównych cech oficjalnego dyskursu pedagogicznego, który wyraża tę rekonfigurację poprzez syllabus języka portugalskiego. Potem przedmiotem zainteresowania czynię podręczniki szkolne, aby zrozumieć, w jaki sposób interpretują one oficjalny dyskurs i jak pojmują pedagogiczną praktykę. Później, aby wykazać podobieństwa i rozbieżności między pedagogiką a sferą publiczną, zajmuję się analizą korpusu tekstów w mediach, które traktują o nauczaniu portugalskiego. W ostatniej części, nawiązując do poprzednich analiz, dyskutuję napięcia, jakie wiążą się z dziedziną języka portugalskiego i jakie prawdopodobnie będą wpływały na kierunki jej rozwoju.

Portuguese. Resumo. [Translation Paulo Feytor Pinto].

A última década, em Portugal, caracterizou-se por importantes reformas no sistema educativo, em particular, no ensino secundário. A Área da Língua Portuguesa, que comporta várias disciplinas, foi submetida a mudanças profundas quanto aos seus objectivos, conteúdos, metodologias e avaliação.

Neste artigo, tenciono analisar algumas dessas mudanças, focando os princípios que lhes estão subjacentes, as suas principais características e o seu impacto tanto no domínio pedagógico como na esfera pública.

Em primeiro lugar, abordo as circunstâncias educativas e políticas em que esta reconfiguração da Área da Língua Portuguesa no ensino secundário teve lugar. Depois, descrevo as principais características do discurso pedagógico oficial que exprime essa reconfiguração através da análise do programa de Língua Portuguesa. Em seguida, a atenção centrar-se-á nos manuais escolares tendo em vista compreender como interpretam o discurso oficial e como concebem a prática pedagógica. Na tentativa de diagnosticar continuidades e discrepâncias entre os domínios pedagógico e público, será analisado um conjunto de textos da comunicação social que exprimem posições relativas ao ensino do Português. Na última secção, de acordo com a análise anterior, reflecte-se sobre as tensões que perpassam a Área da Língua Portuguesa e que irão provavelmente regular a direcção de desenvolvimentos futuros.

1.   RECONFIGURATION OF THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE IN SECONDARY SCHOOL: CIRCUMSTANCES AND MATRICES

In Portugal, the last years of the 20th century and the first years of the current one were marked by important reforms of the educational system with strong emphasis on the curriculum of basic and secondary education.

In 1997, a left-wing government, following the identification of a series of "inadequacies", initiated a "curricular reform", recognising secondary education (10th-12th grades) as "subordinated to the demands of higher education". Against this subordination were now placed strong pressures to respond "to the needs of the world of work" (DES, 1997, p. 6).

After a period of public debate, the Department for Secondary Education synthesised the fundamental principles of "curricular reform" (DES, 2000). The search for the "identity" of secondary education is based upon a "significant group of competencies of a personal, academic and professional nature" (p. 15) relevant either to "obtaining a secondary school diploma and a professional certificate that allows access to a qualified job", or to "obtaining a secondary school diploma and a candidature to higher education". Hence, a "diversity of courses" is decided, motivated by the "heterogeneity of pupils and social needs" (p. 15). The DSE also announced the

"differentiation of the syllabi of secondary education, according to the nature of its courses" (p. 12).

Principles of this nature would naturally act upon curriculum design. Law 7/2001 instituted general courses, aiming to prepare for higher education, and technological courses, aiming to prepare for the labour market. Among the former, one can find courses on Natural Sciences, Science and Technology, Visual Arts, or Languages and Literatures courses. The latter include Mechanics, Multimedia and Tourism and Administration, among others. This Law represents an important turning point in the conceptualisation of the Portuguese Language Area at the secondary education level, with the creation, for the first time, of a discipline named Portuguese Language common to all courses, "general" and "technological".

However, the development of this "curricular reform" met various obstacles, some of them purely political. In April, 2003, with Portugal then under a right-wing government, another version of the reform of secondary education was announced. In it remained the idea of Portuguese as a compulsory discipline for all the "scientific-humanistic" (previously "general") and "technological" courses. Besides Portuguese, three other non-compulsory disciplines belong to the Portuguese Language Area – Portuguese Literature; Literatures in Portuguese; and Classics of Literature. The last appears in the curriculum of Visual Arts and Sciences and Technologies courses, the first two in the Languages and Literatures course.

The new curriculum design and the corresponding syllabi and school textbooks implied profound transformations in the Portuguese Language Area, bringing about intense debates in the media around its objectives and contents.

The main aim of the present discussion, in which I revisit some research I have been conducting during the last years (see Castro, 2001, and Castro, 2005, for a more comprehensive approach to that research), is to reflect on these contemporary processes of (re)configuration of the Portuguese Language Area. The analysis will aim to:

1) identify and characterise the structuring principles that operate on the level of the official pedagogic discourse, that is, of the *instituting discourse*;
2) analyse aspects of the *constituent discourse*, the discourse which recontextualises official pedagogic discourse at the level of pedagogic practice;
3) analyse the texts that, in the public sphere, express positions on the teaching of Portuguese, giving rise, at least potentially, to a *generative discourse*;
4) ponder, starting from the analysis of these various discourses, those tensions that lie across the Portuguese Language Area that will probably regulate the directions of its development.

2.   THE RECONFIGURATION OF THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE AREA
     IN SECONDARY EDUCATION: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Definable as "a principle for appropriating other discourses and bringing them into a special relation with each other for the purposes of their selective transmission and acquisition" (Bernstein, 1990, p. 183-184), the pedagogic discourse intends "to position the subjects (students and teachers) in relation to a legitimate group of *meanings*

and of *social relationships*", that is, to "educational knowledge" and to "specific practices regulating the transmission-acquisition of legitimate meanings and of the constitution of order, relation and identity" (Domingos *et al.*, 1986, p. 295-297).

The pedagogic discourse entails "a recontextualising principle which selectively appropriates, refocuses, and relates other discourses" (Bernstein, 1990, p.184). The different levels of production and reproduction of the pedagogic discourse, maintaining relationships of mutual regulation, are characterised, simultaneously, by a relative autonomy, which supposes that between them (and also internally), tensions and even contradictions may exist. Between what the school syllabi establish and what the teachers say and do, non-coincidences may exist (and, in fact, do). The same applies when we think of the appropriating nature that the school textbooks have on the syllabi; the concept of recontextualisation is, with this purpose, particularly productive; indeed, the relocation of a text in another place is a process that does not occur without a re-interpretation.

In this framework, a fundamental distinction exists between the discourse that *constitutes* pedagogic practices – the discourse of the teachers and the students in classes – and the discourse that *institutes* pedagogic practices, materialised in official texts, aiming at the regulation of the meanings produced in the classes – e. g. school syllabi.

The school curriculum, that expresses, in the words of Raymond Williams, a "selective version" of "knowledge" and "culture" not disconnected from social relations (Williams, 1995, p. 186), has, in "school syllabi", one of the places of materialisation of that "selection". In Portugal, the choices that the school syllabi enact, which are always in relation to more general options of a political nature about what formal education should be, are made concrete at the level of objectives, content, methodologies, and assessment. The school syllabi are, in consequence, shaped as places of regulation of other instances in the pedagogic field, and prompt, in those places of regulation, its recognition as a legitimate and legitimising reference.

The school syllabi are inscribed in a framework of intertextual relations that give them a particular meaning. They can be seen as places of sedimentation and of reorganisation of a heterogeneous group of references, located in different discursive fields, which are officially "translated" into the interior of the pedagogic field; in this sense, they emphasise the nature of the curriculum as a "social artefact" (Goodson, 1994). When they establish educational objectives, when they circumscribe certain bodies of knowledge or induce certain forms of organising pedagogic work, the school syllabi are a "source" of other texts, at the level both of the official discourse and the classroom discourse. The effects that they engender are not restricted to these places, however. The polemics in the public sphere around the significance of the more recent changes in the curriculum of the Portuguese Language Area in secondary education strengthen the range and impact that those official decisions have which are made in the arena of linguistic and literary education.

At the level of *constituent discourse*, the use of the category "school textbook" allows the description of a vast group of materials, diverse in dimension, in content, in the temporal and spatial range of use and in structuring power in relation to the organisation of the pedagogic work of the students and teachers (*cf.* Escolano Benito, 2002, for a characterization).

In the case of the disciplines in the Portuguese Language Area, the textbooks have, at the present time, a markedly "composite" structure, being organised on two principal levels: "one, *foundational*, constituted by the selected texts ... the anthology; the other, *complementary*, constituted by exercises ... from which 'contents' can be extracted" (Dionísio, 2000, p. 106-107).

These two levels will give expression, on the one hand, to the legitimate texts and, on the other, among other aspects, to the legitimate ways of reading them. In this way, they signify "through their content *and* form — particular constructions of reality, particular ways of selecting and organising that vast universe of possible knowledge" (Apple and Christian Smith, 1991, p. 3). Textbooks mediate the relationships between the texts and the readers that are being educated, becoming a powerful instance in the enlisting of readers in specific reading formations, constituted by meanings and by rules and conditions for their production. In this process, the school textbooks, like the syllabi, function as places of articulation of the pedagogic field with other fields. Marisa Lajolo and Regina Zilberman refer to them as a "perfect hinge" when they analyse their role in the institutionalisation of the reader's education and they consider them as places of repercussion of literary production (Lajolo and Zilberman, 1998, p. 310).

Syllabi and school textbooks, in their concrete conditions of existence, in their principles of constitution, in their contents, are inscribed in specific inter-discourse networks. In relation to this, we have witnessed recently, in Portugal, the issues of language and literary education assuming an unusual visibility in the media – in the shape of positions taken on the part of teachers' associations, university departments, researchers in diverse scientific areas, writers and essayists, politicians and opinion makers.

This means a movement of transformation of the relationships of the pedagogic discourse with other discourses, with the sphere of the media emerging as an efficient place to guarantee that transformation, as a particularly relevant site for the construction of a "consensus".

In the perspective that I here adopt, the Portuguese Language Area is understood as a radically complex reality, an effect not only of the diversity of levels and agencies that discursively structure it, but also of the body of conceptions and practices that reflect the multiple possible views of its objects and objectives.

In trying to clarify aspects of this reality, the conceptual framework outlined articulates different discursive fields and levels and, within them, different categories. By "thinking relationally" (Bourdieu, 1994), it is assumed that the properties of the instances/agents/discourses derive from the framework of relationships in which they are inscribed.

3. THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE AREA IN SECONDARY EDUCATION: THE CHANGES IN THE INSTITUTING DISCOURSE

When one analyses the current changes in secondary education in Portugal, one of the most visible structuring principles is the search for an articulation between a body of specialised competencies – identifying secondary education – and a multi-

plicity of courses with sufficiently distinct characteristics, expressing different connections between secondary education, the labour market and higher education.

In this context, the scope of the Portuguese Language Area, involving "competencies" that one usually understands as relevant to a professional life, would inevitably be redefined. In the framework of the "curricular reform", a main decision was the creation of the discipline of Portuguese Language, common to all courses in secondary education.

In the official discourse, the justification for this decision was vague, and even incoherent. In spite of that, very few voices in the professional, educational or academic fields opposed that creation. Indeed, this decision appeared to correspond to a very common judgement, produced in various discursive contexts, that school had not been able to insure the development of basic competencies in reading and writing. This diagnosis is reinforced by data from assessment studies that sometimes offer a very unfavourable picture in relation to the verbal competencies of Portuguese students (see, for this purpose, Sim-Sim & Ramalho, 1993, Benavente, 1996; Delgado-Martins *et al.*, 2000; Ramalho, 2001).

In this perspective, the creation of the discipline of Portuguese Language will have effectively answered new demands made to schools, at the level of language education, as they are perceived from the State's point of view. This solution, implying a re-orientation of the curriculum, is inscribed, even so, in a specific framework of tendencies that are visible when the historical construction of the Portuguese Language Area is considered, namely:

1) a progressively more complex conception of the disciplines of the Area, visible in the increased differentiation and structuring of their various "fields": reading, writing, etc.;

2) the displacement from a normative conception of language education to a more "developmental" one;

3) the redefinition of the structuring nuclei of the discipline that accompanies the shift from "knowledge" to "skills", affecting the status and functions of "literature" and "grammar" (*cf.* Castro, 1995, chap. 3, for some empirical data).

It is against this background that the new syllabus of Portuguese Language is placed. This syllabus is a document that, in extension, is one of the longest in the history of curriculum. Its content denotes a tension between the expression of its underlying theoretical conceptions, the formulation of general principles and the presentation of guiding lines for pedagogic practice. The syllabus ends up favouring the latter — about half the text is occupied by the presentation of principles and proposals on methods of teaching. The range of the syllabus reveals the choice of a model that prefigures strong regulation of the profession. Simultaneously, its assumption as a "theoretical place" produces a representation about:

1) its conditions of applicability, implying that the necessary knowledge is not held by the teachers and

2) the models of diffusion of the innovation in the pedagogic field, viewed as operating mostly from the "centre".

Theorisation and injunction appear, in this way, as elements of an original constellation.

From the analysis of the goals of the syllabus, one can better understand the tenor of the pedagogic project under consideration. Explicitly instituting "listening", "speaking", "writing", "reading" and "knowledge about language" as "nuclear competencies", in articulation with various types of texts, the syllabus states the preparation of "young citizens towards integration in socio-cultural and professional life" as an aim (p. 4).

The "specialised" goals announced for the discipline are: the development of communicative competence; the development of positive attitudes towards reading, with special attention towards "reading literature for pleasure"; the promotion of knowledge, namely, about the language and about the "representative works/authors of the literary tradition", and the development of capabilities of processing information (p. 6-7). These options congruently articulate with the emphasis on "competencies" as a vector of the syllabus (a category that has recently been having a remarkable reception in the official pedagogic discourse), and involve the assumption of a set of "macro competencies" — of *communication,* and of *education towards citizenship*, among others.

These orientations represent a change of deep significance, especially visible when the regulating framework that they generate is contrasted with the pre-existing one, which gave enormous centrality to knowledge *about* literature. Indeed, a diachronic analysis of the syllabi of secondary education in the Portuguese Language Area, allows us to identify the permanence, up to the present, of some other principles:

1) literature constitutes a central object;
2) literature is of value principally for its cognitive dimension;
3) the literature that is important is that which results from the valuation of a significant and significantly stable group of texts.

Therefore, what we now find is the emergence of a new organising principle – textual typologies – viewed as articulating different competencies. The "text", in its multiple possibilities, begins to be constituted as a fundamental unit, allowing the consideration of the diversity of communicative situations. On this route, through the consideration of pragmatic conditions, "use" is associated with "analysis" through reflection on what the characteristics of each type are. If this same principle, though not exactly under the same form or with the same impact, already appeared in other school syllabi, it is now installed as the *fundamental* principle. This fact must be connected to a new definition of goals for language education, in which new horizons for learning gain relevance, new connections between school and what is beyond school are foreseen, and other representations of relevant pedagogic knowledge are used. In this context, literature is *repositioned*. One interpretation of this is that it signals "the tendency of subjugation of the literary text to the communication and pragmatic paradigms [...] which will lead to a disrespect for the non-immediate dimensions of Art" (Branco, 2001, p. 99). A different interpretation assumes that if literary texts are merely seen as examples of types of text, this can contribute to reinforcing the idealisation of literature (Zilberman, 2003, p. 266). This is especially the case if the view of literature that appears, is as something "added on to" the contents and nuclear processes (*cf.* Aguiar e Silva, 1998-99, for a critique of this position).

4. THE CONSTITUENT DISCOURSE: THE RECONTEXTUALISATION
PRODUCED BY SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

The understanding of the effects of the reconfiguration process of which the syllabi are the centre gains by considering the appropriation of its principles by the school textbooks – the object to which I will now turn my attention. I will proceed by analysing all those thirteen that were published in 2003, for the Portuguese Language syllabus (10th grade), by various publishers.

In Table 1 (see Appendix), the external structure of the textbooks of the *corpus* is represented. The data reveal a structure in which a nucleus stands out, constituted by didactic[1] units or sequences with which other rubrics, more systematic or more episodic, are associated. Among these are instruments to assess the textbook itself (an obvious self legitimating device), explanations of its structure (a testament to its complexity as textual object), informative texts, examples of lesson planning and assessment tests.

If the disposition and the designation of the didactic units are analysed in order to identify their organisational principles, choices common to the textbooks of the *corpus* become evident – choices that are very similar to those that operate in the syllabus. The institution of the "types of text" as the principal organising criterion is a clearly dominant procedure. However, this principle appears violated in a place that is particularly significant – I am referring to the institution, in about a third of the analysed books, of the lyrical poetry of Camões, the Portuguese 16th century "national" poet, as an autonomous didactic unit. This fact shows the enormous sensitivity of textbooks to:
1) the relevance of the curricular tradition;
2) the canonical centrality, in this tradition, of the poetry of Camões; and also
3) the polemics in the media about the ways literature exists in school, that took place during the development of the "curricular reform".

Nevertheless, Camões' poetry appears now in a new context. This fact justifies the analysis of the modes Camões' poetry assumes in the textbooks. What can first be observed is the existence of discrepancies in the number of the selected texts. Linked with this is the fact that those texts are very different from textbook to textbook. From a total of seventy poems that could be identified, only five are present in more than half of the books and only one – the sonnet *Erros meus, má fortuna, amor ardente* – appears in more than three quarters of them. These facts clearly indicate a restructuring process of the *corpus* of legitimate school texts and, simultaneously, of the re-interpretation of the official syllabus produced by the textbooks' authors. Such indicators cannot help being associated with the new objectives of the discipline.

If the issue of the selected texts is relevant, so too is the nature of their proposed reading, made visible through "discursive frames" (e. g. sentences expressing the textbook authors' viewpoints about the meanings of the texts) and "questionnaires", including questions both on the meanings and the formal aspects of the text. I take,

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[1] *As with all articles in this edition, the notion of "didactics" is equivalent to the English notion "pedagogy"*

therefore, now, as an example, the text of Camões, *par exellence*, in the *corpus*, the sonnet "*Erros meus, má fortuna, amor ardente*", using, for analysis, a group of categories that intends to highlight the textual structures elicited and the reading operations mobilised (*cf.* Dionísio, 2000).

The consideration of the data (see Table 2 Appendix) allows us to see, beyond some fluctuations from textbook to textbook, a set of fundamental choices that signals the existence of a dominant "way of reading".

In terms of "discursive frames", the authors of the textbooks favour the global semantic-pragmatic aspects. The formal aspects are rarely stated and, when they are considered, they appear under the form of reference to rhetorical-stylistic aspects. When one takes into account the reading operations made, "synthesis" emerges as the dominant operation, with "identification" and "inference" also significant.

The desired reading solicited through the questionnaire that usually follows it involves confluence and discrepancy with the way of reading present in the discursive frames. In questions about the texts (see Table 2), at the textual level, the local semantic-pragmatic aspects are predominant. Such "local" aspects, however, do not exclude lexical-grammatical aspects or more global interpretations. In relation to reading operations, when one goes from the "given" reading to the "asked for" reading, one witnesses a reinforcement of "identification" and "justification". Thus, when one pays attention to textual structures mobilised in the frames and in the questions, one witnesses a phenomenon already identified in other studies that can be described as a "social division of interpretative work" (Castro & Dionísio, 2003). Such work, however, is always closer to the "paraphrastic" pole than to the "polysemic" (Orlandi, 1999). This tends to exclude what Martins (2003) understands as the "vivification of the literary experience": the "dialogue between subjectivities" - of the author (a fictional entity revealed strictly in the text) and of the student (interpretative entity discovered from the text) (p. 116). The possibility of the reappropriation by the students of their "productive role" (Geraldi, 1996) is also excluded. Something that it is important to note, once more, is that the various textbooks are based on a common structure of principles that generate quite similar solutions.

In short, in relation to the modes of discursive production in Portuguese Language configured by the school textbooks, the following aspects should be accentuated:

- they intend a strong regulation of the pedagogic practice;
- they reveal a significant incorporation of the ideas the syllabi convey, and
- the way they conceive the reading of literary texts is very close to tradition.

5.   THE MEDIA AND THE MEANING(S) OF THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE AREA

The curricular changes in secondary education were accompanied in the media – mostly in the press – by a controversy that gained special visibility in the year 2001, in relation to the "exclusion" of the epic poem of Camões, *Os Lusíadas*, from the syllabus of Portuguese Language.

The "debate" about *Os Lusíadas*, by involving the most canonical of the Portuguese literary texts, enabled the expression, in the first instance, of ideas and representations about the *status* and the functions of literature in school and, therefore, about the curriculum and school. Consequently, the texts of the "debate" itself constitute extremely interesting material to analyse in the sense of identifying and analysing dominant and dominated discursive formations.

The first point is that in the press, the *pedagogic reason* for *Os Lusíadas* – the aim of teaching it – is scarcely present. In the "debate", it is as if such reasons and objectives were naturalised, avoiding the argumentative *démarche*, substituted by references to the "absolute primacy" [NP] of the work of Camões, to its position as an "irreducible basic component of all the cultures that express themselves in Portuguese" [JAB], to its condition as "a symbol of [...] the homeland itself" [IO].

This lack has a counterpoint in discussion of methodology. A historical approach questions the emphasis put on the syntactical approaches and the ideological slant that the poem was subjected to – "[in my generation] The majority didn't reach, in school, Camões. And those who did became vaccinated. [...] Some of us would later discover that 'another' Camões existed, less of a hero and more interesting. But it wasn't that one […] we learned. In school, we learned about our homeland and about grammar through *Os Lusíadas*" [MP]. Also dominant is the sceptical view about what goes on in contemporary schools: "What we, in general, have, today, are schools that are organised and function as immense morgues, where students, daily, painfully, are called upon to hold the scalpel of the grammarians and of the literary exegetes, to autopsy texts that, frequently, do not tell them anything" [AFS].

This debate goes beyond the circumstances of this "curricular reform". Indeed, the "debate" allows one to verify that, more than *Os Lusíadas*, what was really often significant was the role of literature in school. In this respect, one particular argument frequently formed the basis for the "defence of literature": its relevance to developing communicative competence.

Criticism of the teaching of literature in schools tends to stress a crisis scenario. The "unskilful smallness that we hear spoken around us" [EPC] would find the right correspondence in the perception that "the sphere of literature has been getting smaller in the whole world, has been becoming illegitimate and has been substituted by a communicational ideology that mixes everything" [AC].

However, the discussion around Portuguese Language in secondary education did not come to an end with this controversy about *Os Lusíadas*. Two subsequent movements came about, regulated either by the political calendar or by the educational one.

In the context of the public discussion of the Secondary Education Reform Proposal, presented in November 2002, a new controversy emerged in the press on the issue of Portuguese Language in school. These were articles mostly produced by university teachers, in the main from literary studies, or by literary critics. Having as fundamental topics the *status* and functions of literature in school, such texts appeared mostly to oppose the curricular separation between Portuguese Language and Portuguese Literature and the transformation of Portuguese Literature into a non-compulsory discipline in the Languages and Literatures course. This debate positioned literature as:

1) "educational capital", as a form of knowledge, enabling the understanding of the "configuration and reconfiguration of the historical and trans-historical experience of very diverse human communities" [MG],
2) a means of promoting the development of language, because, in literature, "we can find the invention of 'language games'" [MG], and
3) a means of promoting personal development, since literature influences "the phases of emotional and cognitive development proper to adolescents" [ASS].

The controversy about the Portuguese Language Area in the press had a new eruption at the beginning of the school year 2003-2004. This came about because of the content of some school textbooks adopted in the schools. The starting point was the presence, in one of those textbooks, of the rules of a television contest, though it was clear from the beginning that something more was at stake. Frequently functioning through synecdoche, that text was taken as an example of the transformations being promoted. They were seen as an example of the closing of perspectives on the world, an example of the subordination of school to the media that will end up by shaping the legitimate school culture and will constitute a perversion of the proper functions of school: "Little by little, the logic of television invades textbooks that begin to be transformed into tabloids. The 'tabloid culture' takes over everything; it is not a sub-product any more, it is all the available 'culture'" [EXP].

These facts were also seen as examples of the inevitable effects of the new syllabus in Portuguese Language, characterised by the "discursive utilitarianism" that has in mind "to educate the adolescents in the technique of writing a non-literary text properly", that proposes the teaching of the language "without taking advantage of its more refined uses" [CC], a syllabus that promotes "the subordination of literature, with its fitting into the different typologies of text" [MCV]. These arguments are built on another that values "the learning of the canon. [...] School serves, or should serve, to transmit, to everyone, to children of the rich and to children of the poor, the cultural heritage" [MFM].

These articles, motivated by the development of the curricular reform of secondary education, themselves make possible a mapping of the diverse discursive fields which operate in the construction of the curriculum, and of their inter-relation. They allow the identification of the permanence and the strength of a body of ideas and arguments that represent the attributed functions of secondary education and the attributed functions of the Portuguese Language Area.

In the first instance, the texts of the press debate itself assert the symbolic value that literature holds quite apart from its conceptualisation as a primary place of linguistic, cognitive, social and aesthetic experience. The literature that is, then, talked about is, fundamentally, the canonical literature, that of the "great authors", whose study appears as a guaranteed link to a specific cultural tradition, as a guarantee of accessing the cultural heritage and the historical community to which young people belong. Thus, in a more or less tacit way, what is questioned is the relevance of the development of communicative competence, though the power of this representation appears to contaminate even the "defence of literature". These principles are also grounded on a specific representation of what school is today - a place where ease and amusement hold sway, to the detriment of values like discipline and work, with

the current reform of content being viewed as only aggravating such a state of things.

6. THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE AREA IN SECONDARY EDUCATION: TENSIONS AND DEVELOPMENT TENDENCIES

The social practice that we designate as "teaching Portuguese language" is, today, criss-crossed by profound tensions in the competitive coexistence of ways, sometimes radically distinct, of conceptualising and practising it. These tensions and the signs that reveal them became particularly clear in the context of the "reform of secondary education" in Portugal from 1997.

The positions recognised in regard to that reform manifest conceptions about the meaning of teaching and learning Portuguese in school. They suppose values and assumptions related to the objectives and the contents of the disciplines of the Area, related to what teaching and learning are and related to political and social realities.

Louise Poulson (1998), in a particularly stimulating survey of issues related to the teaching of English, lists three principal aims that that discipline can accomplish, viz those:

1) of a functional nature, when it selects, as a priority, the development of skills in writing and reading and the preparation of students for the roles of citizens and of workers;

2) of a cultural and humanistic nature, when it emphasises the development of intellectual capacities and promotes the acquisition of moral, cultural and aesthetic values;

3) of a critical nature, when it is oriented towards promoting the understanding of the society and of the culture in which one lives and the identification of the role that can be performed in its construction and change.

In a certain sense, the repositioning of "language" and "literature" in the curriculum that has been taking place in Portugal can be analysed in the context of the confrontation between the "more functional" and the "more humanistic" perspectives. However, this analysis grid may be inadequate, because of the multiplicity of possible viewpoints. Certainly, the view of "language teaching" will be of one sort when aimed at the acquisition of a formal representation of the language; but it will be a completely different one if the intention is to create conditions for developing a critical view of language and the world. In the same way, "literature" can be viewed either as a document or monument, or as a place for the exploration of worlds and, in them, of worlds of language. The new curriculum for secondary education, both at the official and the pedagogic level, produces specific answers to some of these issues (not only in respect to the conceptions it conveys, but also in the ways of reproduction it foresees), the meaning of which must be interpreted in relation to the changes that are currently going on in economy and society – themselves compelling a redefinition of the school mandate.

At present, facing Portuguese Language teaching is a confrontation between "plans". Some of these are more oriented towards guaranteeing "the reading of the world along with the reading of the word relating to the world" (Freire and Silva,

1999). These promote a view on language and literature that values their potential for linguistic, cognitive, social or aesthetic experience. Other "plans" are more concerned with the production of what James Gee characterizes as "'knowledge workers' who must bring technical, collaborative and communication skills to the work place" (Gee, 1996, p. 36). These latter are undoubtedly the dominant ones. Thus, those functions of literature dominant in the past – national cohesion; social "integration"; guaranteeing the consolidation, in school, of the legitimate language; "refining taste" – are also in crisis.

The current changes in economy and society end up affecting, in another sense, the forms of reception of literature in school. The ways literature is read – in schools – at least in Portugal – cannot be considered apart from instructional resources, which, in general, have been reinforcing practices in which "literature is made miniature in the condition of text" (Zilberman, 2003) and, on the other hand, in which literature is transformed "into an informative text, into an educating text, into a pretext for metalinguistic exercises" (Soares, 2003). These resources are essentially an effect of the educational market.

Indeed, there is an insufficiently explored issue, which is of the possibilities and the conditions for the existence of literature in this new educational and social framework. For instance, the dominant discursive formation in the media omits the relationships between what it proposes the reading of literature should be and what are the circumstances in which it exists in school. Frequently, what is heard is the defence of literature based on its value in use and the defence of a context for its existence in which the symbolic values are mostly those of exchange. It is this unresolved conflict that is formulated when the educating and formative potential of literature is advocated simultaneously with the construction of normalising assessment devices. These devices, as I have written elsewhere, "are contributing to make reading practices, and not only the reading of literature, what they are today — succedanea of reading" (Castro, 2001). In other words, assuming literature as "destabilising practice", as practice that "does not take away or impose beliefs, but suspends them, leaving us (readers) the freedom and the responsibility, that is, the right to respond" (Lopes, 1994, p. 480), how could it, therefore, exist in the schools we have?

In this context, what is perplexing is the popularity of arguments that propose a kind of return to a mythical golden age, ignoring the historicity of school and school knowledge. The most stimulating challenge is, however, another one: to favour a comprehensive view of language, the observation of language as a social phenomenon, the understanding of the way language functions as a system, how it is used to communicate meanings, how it constructs reality and positions us facing it. All this implies the diversification of the circumstances and of the objects involved in the relationship with language, because "how one becomes literate — what one learns of the sites, locations, practices of writing and reading — will greatly constrain how one conceives the potential of literacy" (Luke, 1988). It also compels us to scrutinise, radically and continuously, school itself, and, of course, society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX

Table 1. Structure of School Textbooks

	ETS	COM	EM	AP	PLU	IMA	PS	SEP	DIS	P&L	AL	DP	DPA
Categories													
1. Textbook evaluation	+					+	+						
2. Forward	+	+				+	+	+	+		+	+	+
3. Textbook structure description	+	+			+	+		+	+		+		+
4. Didactic units	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
5. Appendix (informative texts on grammar, history of literature, rhetoric…)	+		+	+	+		+						
6. Lesson plans			+			+			+				
7. Assessment tests					+		+						

Table 2. Text structures and reading tasks in discursive frames and questionnaires

		Discursive Frames												
		Text Structures						Reading Tasks						
	Level		Scope		Form									
	Phonology	Vocabulary Grammar	Semantics Pragmatics	Local	Global	Type	Rhetoric	Identification	Inference	Synthesis	Judgement of value	Justification	Prior knowledge	Classification
Text-books														
ETS	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	-
COM	-	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
AP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PLU	-	-	+	+	++	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
PS	-	+	++	+	++	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+
SEP	-	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
DIS														
P&L	-	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
AL														
DP	+	-	++	++	+	-	-	+	++	-	-	-	-	-
DPA	+	++	++	+	++	-	+	++	++	-	-	-	+	-

							Questionnaires						
		Text Structures						Reading Tasks					
	Level		Scope		Form								
Phonology	Vocabulary Grammar	Semantics Pragmatics	Local	Global	Type	Rhetoric	Identification	Inference	Synthesis	Judgement of value	Justification	Prior knowledge	Classification
Text-books													
ETS +	++	++	++	+	-	+	++	++	+	++	-	-	-
COM -	+	++	++	+	-	-	++	+	+	-	+	-	-
AP -	+	++	++	++	-	-	+	++	++	-	++	-	-
PLU -	+	++	+	-	-	-	++	+	+	-	-	-	-
PS +	++	++	++	+	-	-	++	+	++	-	-	-	-
SEP -	+	++	++	+	-	-	++	++	++	-	-	+	-
DIS -	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
P&L -	-	+	++	+	-	-	++	++	+	-	-	-	-
AL -	-	+	++	++	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-

Key: [-] missing; [+] present;   [++] strongly present