

SOCIOLINGUISTICS CONTEXTUALIZATION OF GUINEAN “CREOLE” IN GUINEA- BISSAU

CONTEXTUALIZAÇÃO SOCIOLINGÜÍSTICA DO “CRIOULO” GUINEENSE EM GUINÉ-
BISSAU

CONTEXTUALIZACIÓN SOCIOLINGÜÍSTICA DEL “CRIOLLO” GUINEANO EM GUINEA-
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ABSTRACT: The present work aims to investigate the sociolinguistics context in which the Guinean language (“creole” or “Kriol”) is inserted in Guinea-Bissau, from the point of view of the users. To talk about the genesis of the Guinean language, we consider Embaló (2008) and Rougé (1994). Concerning language policies, we rely on Couto (1996), Timbane and Manuel (2018), Calvet (2002), and Silva (2013). Regarding the methodology, we resorted to the qualitative and quantitative analysis of semi-structured questionnaires, submitted to 25 Guinean participants. The surveys covered factors related to the languages in use in Guinea-Bissau, the use of the Guinean language in the school environment and institutions, and the evaluation of the importance of this language in the country. The results show reports that converge with each other about an oppressive linguistic policy on the use of Guinean in the educational system. On the other hand, there was a divergence of opinions from the participants about the formalization and teaching of the Guinean language in the school environment.

KEYWORDS: Guinean language. Guinean creole. Language policies in Guinea-Bissau. Sociolinguistics context. PALOP.

RESUMO: O presente trabalho tem por objetivo investigar o contexto sociolinguístico em que se insere a língua guineense em Guiné-Bissau, sob o ponto de vista de seus usuários. No referencial teórico, para tratar da gênese da língua guineense, consideramos Embaló (2008) e Rougé (1994). No que se refere às políticas linguísticas, apoiamo-nos em Couto (1996), Timbane e Manuel (2018), Calvet (2002) e Silva (2013). Em relação à metodologia, recorremos à análise qualiquantitativa de questionários semiestruturados, submetidos a 25 participantes guineenses. Os inquéritos abarcaram fatores relacionados às línguas em uso na Guiné-Bissau, ao emprego da língua guineense no ambiente escolar e nas instituições e à avaliação sobre a importância dessa língua no país. Os resultados evidenciam relatos que convergem entre si quanto a uma política linguística opressora em relação ao uso do guineense no sistema educacional. Por outro lado, houve divergência de opiniões dos participantes sobre a oficialização e ensino da língua guineense no ambiente escolar.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Língua guineense. Crioulo guineense. Políticas linguísticas na Guiné-Bissau. Contexto sociolinguístico. PALOP.

RESUMEN: El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo investigar el contexto sociolingüístico en el que se inserta la lengua guineana en Guinea-Bissau, desde el punto de vista de sus usuarios. En el marco teórico, para hablar de la génesis de la lengua guineana, consideramos Embaló (2008) y Rougé (1994). En cuanto a las políticas lingüísticas, nos apoyamos en Couto (1996), Timbane y Manuel (2018), Calvet (2002) y Silva (2013). En cuanto a la metodología, recurrimos al análisis cualitativo y cuantitativo de cuestionarios semiestructurados, entregados a 25 participantes guineanos. Las encuestas cubrieron factores relacionados con los idiomas en uso en Guinea-Bissau, el uso del idioma guineano en el entorno escolar y las instituciones y la evaluación de la importancia de este idioma en el país. Los resultados muestran relatos que convergen entre sí respecto a una política lingüística opresiva respecto al uso del guineano en el sistema educativo. Por otro lado, hubo divergencia de opiniones de los participantes sobre la formalización y enseñanza de la lengua guineana en el ámbito escolar.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Lengua guineana. Criollo guineano. Políticas lingüísticas en Guinea-Bissau. Contexto sociolingüístico. PALOP.

1 INTRODUCTION

Guinea-Bissau is a country on the west coast of Africa with a total surface area of 36,125km. It is known for its linguistic and cultural diversity, as there are more than 20 ethnic groups in the territory, each of which has its own language and culture. In addition to ethnic languages, there is also Guinean or “Kriol”, which is the national language, playing a great role in society, as it is used in interethnic relations. Add to this linguistic melting pot the Portuguese language, official in the country and used in the school environment, generally acquired outside the family environment (Rubio and Cá, 2019; Cá and Rubio, 2019, Rubio, 2021).¹

Based on this preliminary information in this work, the reader will find some information that deals with the genesis process of the Guinean language or Kriol (as mentioned by some Guineans) in the territory that today comprises Guinea-Bissau. Besides, aspects related to the current sociolinguistic configuration of the country will be covered, focusing mainly on the Guinean language (“guineense”) and its teaching context. The methodology adopted for data collection will be detailed, as well as the results found after bibliographical research and analysis of the questionnaire submitted to participants.

2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.1 SOME THESES ABOUT THE GENESIS OF THE GUINEAN LANGUAGE

According to Embaló (2008), the “Kriol” or “creole” of Guinea-Bissau, also called Guinean (“guineense”, in Portuguese), would be the “lingua franca” of Guineans, as people from various ethnic groups use it to understand each other in linguistic communities. Regarding its origin and formation, the author emphasizes that this language probably emerged at the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century, but there seems to be no consensus among researchers about the space where it emerged, as there are several hypotheses we can check below.

Thus, according to Embaló (2008), Naro (1978) emphasizes that the “creole” that is spoken today in Guinea-Bissau emerged in Portugal when enslaved people were taken to Europe, in the 15th century and, over time, it was implemented in Guinea-Bissau. On the other hand, some researchers such as Peck (1988) and Kihn (1994) assert that the birth of this language occurred in Cape Verde. In turn, Rougé (1994) presents an opposite thesis, that is, for the author, this language was born due to the coexistence between European colonizers and people who spoke the Mandingo language, already in Guinean territory. Despite this, the author recognizes the contribution of other languages to the development of Guinean. For example, there was influence from Wolof, which, at the time, was a “lingua franca” in the north of the country, as well as the languages spoken in the east, specifically in the “Kingdom of Kaabu”. According to the author, after the inauguration of the cities of Cacheu, Geba, Farim, Bolama, Ziguinchor, and Bissau, “Creole” began to gain space in these areas, even though, the formation of the language in these cities did not occur in the same way, then:

In origin, an 'inside-walls' creole and an 'outside-walls' creole are distinguished. It is a social distinction. It corresponds to the distinction between the Creole of the Christians, mestizos or assimilated people who lived inside the squares, and the Creole of the cabin boys, free Africans who worked in the service of the Portuguese: they performed the tasks of intermediaries in trade, but also various trades such as carpenter, caulker... The cabin boys lived grouped together at the foot of the 'tabanca', the palisade that separated the city from the bush, or in reserved neighborhoods. (Rougé, 2008, p.66, our translation)ⁱⁱ

Therefore, according to Rougé (2008), because it was the first variety developed in the urban area and was practiced by natives who lived with the Portuguese colonizers, it ended up being influenced by the colonizer's language. The second variety, as it does not coexist with the European language, did not retain the influence of Portuguese and maintained the influence of a considerable number of local African languages.

However, a question arises, as we know, Guinea-Bissau, as well as several countries on the African continent, has linguistic diversity. Before the natives coexisted with Europeans, wouldn't this language have appeared among the local people? Since each ethnic group had its own mother tongue, how did communication occur between, for example, "Fulas" ('Pular') and "Balantas"? Or between a "Mandjakus" and "Pepeis"? Between "Biafadas" and "Mansonkas"? Between "Budjukus" and "Nalus"?

The fact is that, with regard to the origin of languages in Africa, mainly the languages that emerged more recently (in the last centuries), generically called "creoles", little is known and studies that deal with the topic are not always based on a purely linguistic bias, being permeated by a socio-historical and geographic vision, which brings together these forms of communication under generalizing labels loaded with prejudice.

Regarding language policies in Guinea-Bissau, as we will see when analyzing the results, there is a state policy that does not value Guinean and ethnic languages. In fact, as Embaló (2008, p. 103, our translation) argues: "From the 20s of the 20th century onwards, it began to be stigmatized and its use ended up being banned by the colonial authorities, the same happening with the languages of ethnolinguistic communities. Kriol came to be seen as an 'uncivilized' language and anyone who spoke Portuguese was considered 'civilized'"ⁱⁱⁱ.

Even in the 21st century, this prejudiced and colonial view persists in Guinea-Bissau, as a person who does not have command of the Portuguese language is often seen as a "backward" individual. Still according to the author, after independence, there was an effort to value the "creole" and for its inclusion in the school system, but this did not materialize, for several reasons, such as: "deficient preparation of the teachers themselves, the lack of teaching materials and the fact that Creole, despite being a national language, is not necessarily the mother tongue of learners." (Embaló, 2008, p.103). This argument, however, seems contradictory to us, since the Portuguese language is also not the first language of the vast majority, if not of all Guineans. Furthermore, there was and still is the production of teaching materials "decontextualized" with the students' reality, almost always, in Portugal.

The linguistic right of Guineans, therefore, was not and is not respected, as the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights defends, for example, that: "article 9: All linguistic communities have the right to codify, standardize, preserve, develop and promote its linguistic system, without interference induced or forced". (Unesco, 1996, p.7). Furthermore, "article 29" points out: 1. Everyone has the right to education in the language of the territory where they reside". (Unesco, 1996, p.10).

2.2 LANGUAGE POLICIES IN GUINEA-BISSAU

Regarding the non-implementation of language policies to value "creole" languages, Couto (1996) emphasizes that the authorities of the countries where these languages are spoken do not show any interest in valuing them in order to satisfy international partners. Timbane and Manuel (2018) agree with the thesis defended by Couto (1996) and emphasize that, in Guinea-Bissau, there is a lack of commitment on the part of government authorities so that the Guinean language can be valued.

On the other hand, some researchers, such as Craig ([1977?] *apud* Couto, 1996), suggest techniques that, if developed, would contribute to the appreciation of “creoles”, such as:

1) Monolingualism in the dominant language; 2) “Monoliterate” bilingualism, in which the child’s vernacular language is admitted in the initial stages to achieve writing in the dominant language; 3) “Monoliterate” bilingualism, in which two languages are literally used fully, except in writing; 4) Partial bilingualism in which the student’s vernacular language is accepted, including for writing, but only when it comes to matters related to their context; 5) Full bilingualism; 6) Monolingualism in the vernacular language. (Couto, 1996, p.78, our translation).iv

Timbane and Manuel (2018) defend the need to apply five actions with the aim of valuing “creoles”, as well as African languages. Firstly, they highlight the importance of applying laws that will allow the insertion of these languages into the education system and state institutions. Subsequently, abandon the view that considers “creole” languages as subcategories of European languages, that is, “[...]include creole languages in the classification of African languages[...]”. Thirdly, encourage the description and recording of these languages. The fifth strategy would be to apply actions that will place Guinean and ethnic languages in the same sphere as European languages. The fifth and final proposal would be to recognize the African substratum as the fundamental base of the “creoles” (Timbane; Manuel, 2018, p.107).

Despite this, for Couto, when applying a language policy, two issues need to be considered in relation to the way they occur: the “coordinating mode” and the “subordinating mode”. Therefore, the first model occurs when the will of individuals in a speech community is respected. On the other hand, the “subordinating mode” is the opposite, that is, it is the one that occurs when a small group decides on the language of society (Couto, 1996).

When analyzing the adoption of European languages, Portuguese, French, English, etc. in African countries, we will see that the “subordinate mode” was applied. For example, in Guinea-Bissau, the officialization of the Portuguese language was announced by a minority of individuals who did not take the population’s opinion into account.

Calvet (2002) highlights that, in communities that live with multilingualism, it is possible to verify two laws that guide this phenomenon: “in vivo” and “in vitro”. Thus, the first (“in vivo”) concerns laws applied by individuals in common, for the purpose of interaction in the community. While the second (“in vitro”) is developed by state authorities, but, before being imposed on society, language scholars are called upon to carry out a preliminary survey and look for solutions to the proposed problem. At this point, as the author records, we can also verify two laws or guidelines: one is aimed only at a certain language, and the other at all languages. With regard to language laws, Calvet (2002, p. 136-38) highlights the following interventions: “1. Reform of writing [...]; 2. Intervention on the lexicon of a language [...]; 3. The standardization of a language [...]”. Therefore, according to the author, the first intervention aims to solve problems related to the writing system of a language, as is the case in China’s past, as, “[t]he communist government, to facilitate people’s access to writing, carried out a spelling reform in 1955: 515 characters and 54 particles were simplified, going from an average of 16 strokes to an average of 8 strokes [...] This simplification, reducing the number of strokes, certainly favors learning and memorization of characters. (Calvet, 2002, p. 137-138, our translation).v

About the second form of action (intervention in the lexicon of a language), in some cases, it is possible to verify the adoption of new words to overcome the “gap” faced by linguistic communities, that is, to create new lexicons to name beings and things. However, the opposite situation can occur, that is, the linguistic community unanimously decides to “purify” their languages, which means excluding all traces of the colonizers’ language, for example (Calvet, 2002). Regarding the “purification” of a language, the researcher reminds us of what happened in Turkey:

In 1923, Mustafa Kamel, led to the presidency of the republic by a secular and nationalist movement, launched the “linguistic revolution” (*dil devrimi*). It was about modernizing the Turkish language, removing all Muslim and Ottoman influences from it, and the main decisions were: first, to move from the Arabic alphabet [...] to an alphabet inspired by the Latin alphabet [...]; second, to provide the teaching of Arabic and Persian in schools[...]; third, systematically replace Arabic or Persian loanwords with terms of Turkish origin[...]; fourth, ask Turkish

citizens to adopt names of Turkish origin: for example: Mustafa Kemal will change his name to Atatürk, “the father of Turkey”. (Calvet, 2002, p. 139, our translation)vi.

Finally, according to the author, the standardization of a language is developed with the purpose of maintaining a unique form in the graphic representation of beings or objects by a linguistic community. However, the author recognizes that, most of the time, this standardization generates opposing ideas among its creators, therefore, he reminds us of what happened in Norway, which, in colonial times, presented a complex linguistic situation. After gaining independence, the government saw the need to standardize Norwegian, which is why parliamentarians voted on several reforms, and in all of them, it is possible to verify two wings, that is, some parliamentarians defended the need to maintain the features of Danish and others who retorted this view, since, for them, it would be interesting to standardize Norwegian based on the popular language.

Regarding the laws on languages, according to Calvet (2002, p.141, our translation): “In situations of plurilingualism, States are led to promote this or that previously dominated language or, on the contrary, to remove the status it previously enjoyed from another, in short, to modify the status and social functions of the languages present”.

However, in Guinea-Bissau, the first case presented by Calvet is not verified, as government authorities did not promote laws that “elevated” the status of ethnic languages and Guinean. Despite this, in the last three years (2020, 2021 and 2023), the language gained a space on Guinea-Bissau National Television (TGB) and news began to be presented in the Guinean language. In our view, the situation is of great relevance, but it is necessary for the Guinean language and ethnic languages to conquer other institutions and gradually raise their status. On the other hand, with regard to the second point mentioned by Calvet (2002), the adoption of the Portuguese language as an official language ended up inferiorizing the Guinean language as well as ethnic languages.

According to Schiffman (1996, *apud* Silva, 2013), there are two types of policies that need to be taken into consideration: an explicit language policy (ELP) and an implicit language policy (ILP). Therefore, depending on the author, we can define the two aspects as follows: the ELP deals with laws or decrees that oblige the use of a language in a given community, while the ILP concerns non-state laws, generally being created by individuals in their communities, with the aim of preserving their languages.

Calvet (2002) confirms that language policy is not developed only by the state, but by any linguistic community or minority, with the aim of safeguarding their language. However, the researcher emphasizes that, for this policy to be effectively applied, only the state has the power. Therefore, according to the author, in some cases, we find policies applied by the state in a given country, but, in some situations, this linguistic policy can be imposed by other sovereign states, in most cases, European (in the African context, mainly). It was this policy that called Guinea-Bissau a “lusophone” country, Senegal and Guinea-Conakry “francophone” countries, although, in fact, Portuguese or French were not languages actually used in these countries.

3 METHODOLOGY

To develop our work, firstly, we resorted to a review of the literature on the subject, in other words, we looked for works that discuss issues related to the formation of the Guinean language and the country's language policies.

In the second phase of the research, we developed a questionnaire on the sociolinguistics context of the Guinean language, focusing on aspects such as linguistic and extralinguistics factors, issues related to employment and language policies in Guinea-Bissau, among others. To this end, we asked questions related to the following topics: a) place of acquisition; b) “comfort” for everyday communication; c) completeness and functionality of communication; d) recourse to another language/s for communication; e) employment in a school environment – sanctions, prohibitions – students’ views; f) assessment of officialization in the country.^{vii}

In the third stage, after preparing the questionnaire, we selected 25 people, with an age range ranging from 18 to 80 years old. After selecting our participants, we presented the questionnaire in written form to people who know Portuguese and an oral interview in Guinean for those who do not know Portuguese.^{viii}

It should be noted that, before submitting the questionnaire, participants signed a Free and Informed Consent Form to record their personal data and authorize the scientific use of the information. Furthermore, participants were assured that at no point during the research would their identity be disclosed.^{ix}

In the fourth and final stage, we quantify and organize the data obtained, as well as analyze them, establishing response frequencies and comparing them with the theoretical foundation. Next, we will present the data obtained.

4 RESULTS

As we presented in the methodology of our work, our questionnaire was answered by 25 participants, 13 men and 12 women. The level of education of these participants varies from Basic Education^x to Postgraduate: 3 have completed Basic Education, 9 have completed High School^{xi}, 7 have completed their undergraduate degree, 4 are pursuing an undergraduate degree and two are in the second semester of postgraduate studies. Of these 25 participants, only 5 were born in Bissau (the capital of the country), and, of the remainder, 3 were born in Bafatá (a region in the east of the country), 3 in Biombo, 1 in Bula, 1 in Bambadinca, 3 in Galomaro Cossé, 2 in Quebo, 2 in Cachine, 1 in Cuntubuel, 1 in Buba, 1 in Gabú, 1 in Bijimita and 1 in Madina de Boé. We also observed that 92.30% learned the Guinean language (*guineense*, *kriol* ou *criolo guineense*, as appointed in the country) and ethnic languages at home and 7.70% in the community, between the ages of 2, 3, and 5. In the feedback, we found that this second percentage is common in participants who have ethnic languages as their mother tongue, as they learn (Fula, Balanta, Pepel, Mancanhi, Biafada, Nalu ...) at home, and then learn the Guinean language. However, those who do not have ethnic languages have the Guinean language as their first language. Below, we present the percentage referring to the place of learning the Guinean language and ethnic languages:

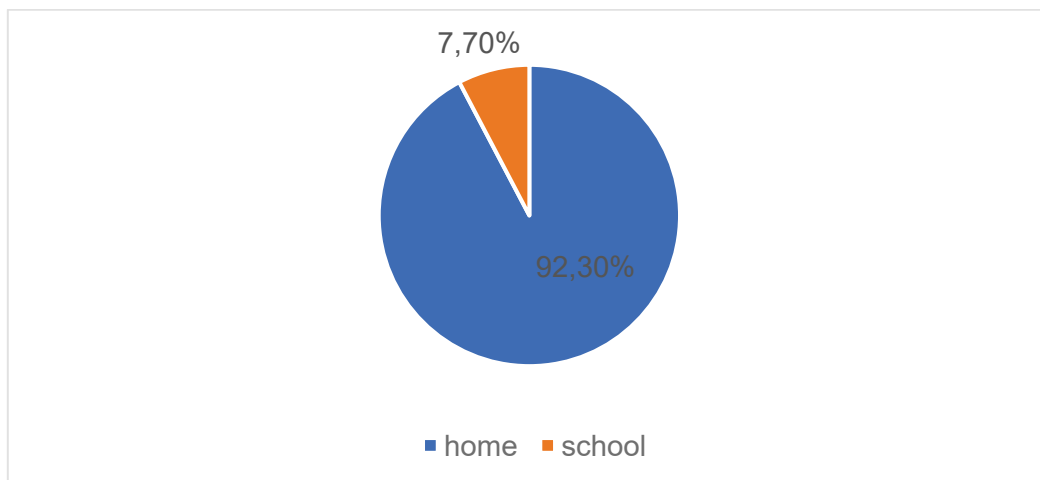


Figure 1: Place of learning of the Guinean language and Ethnic language

Source: Prepared by the authors.

On the other hand, we found that all participants are multilingual, as, in addition to Guinean, they speak ethnic languages (Balanta, Fula, Pepel, Biafada, Mandinga, Nalu and Mandjacu) and Portuguese. Furthermore, some are fluent in English, French, and Arabic (the last three languages are common among participants with a higher level of education). In this way, the use of the last three languages confirms the thesis defended by Timbane and Manuel (2018) and Scantamburlo (1999), that is, in the country, some foreign languages compete for territory with local languages. Likewise, they demonstrate the existence of elective or circumstantial bilingualism, as stated (Ortiz Preuss, 2011, *apud* Ortiz Preuss, Álvares, 2014). On the other hand, the coexistence of these languages proved that there is plurilingualism in the country, as pointed out (Petter, 2015). Below is the graph with this information:

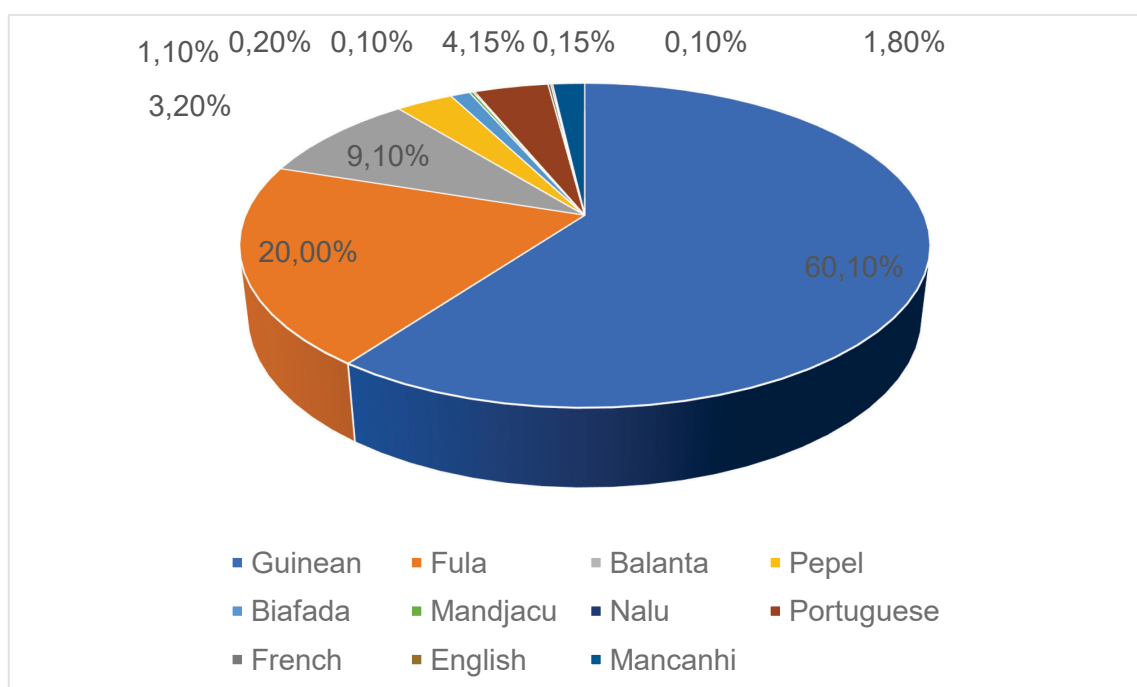


Figure 2: Languages spoken by Guinean participants

Source: Prepared by the authors

In the family environment, the results showed that 69.20% of participants use Guinean more frequently, 23.10% use ethnic languages. It is worth mentioning that, in this second group, due to the status that ethnic languages have in some locations, for example, in the east and south, it is possible to find people who learned Guinean at school age.

Furthermore, this percentage of the second group is due to language policies adopted by some parents and guardians, which promote the appreciation of ethnic languages, as some of the participants reported that their guardians did not allow the use of a language other than their native language, their family's one. In this way, the action of parents or guardians confirmed what Calvet (2002) calls "in vivo" language policies or "implicit" language policies, by Schiffman (1996, apud Silva, 2013). In addition to a language policy developed by the government, there is also one made by ordinary citizens.^{xiii} Next, the results related to the most used language.

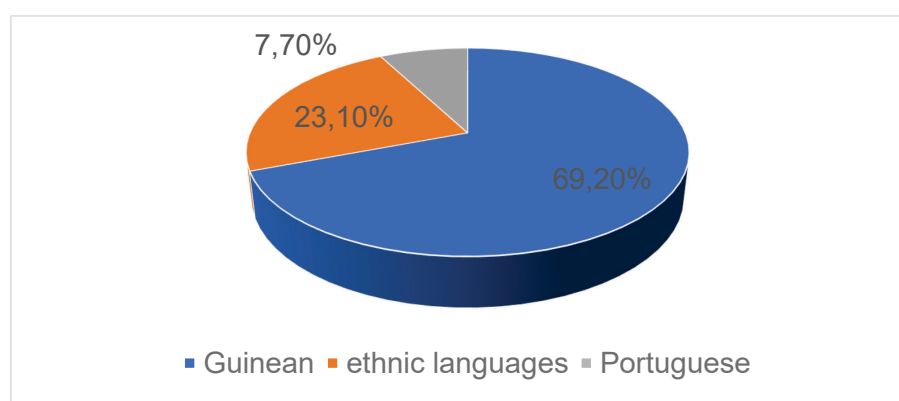


Figure 3: Language most frequently used within the family

Source: Prepared by the authors

Still regarding the language of most frequent use, 7.70% reported using the Portuguese language, a restricted use, but justified by the context of this portion of participants, who are more educated and who are inserted in environments where the use of this language is required, as informed in subsequent questions of the survey. Although Guinean and ethnic languages have a higher percentage of employment, it is not confirmed, in this case, that these majority languages are more prestigious, as Portuguese continues to have a high status in the view of those interviewed, as we will see later.

Regarding the language used most frequently in everyday life, we identified that 78.40% use the Guinean language, while 16.50% use ethnic languages, and 5.10% use Portuguese. Next, the graph with results.

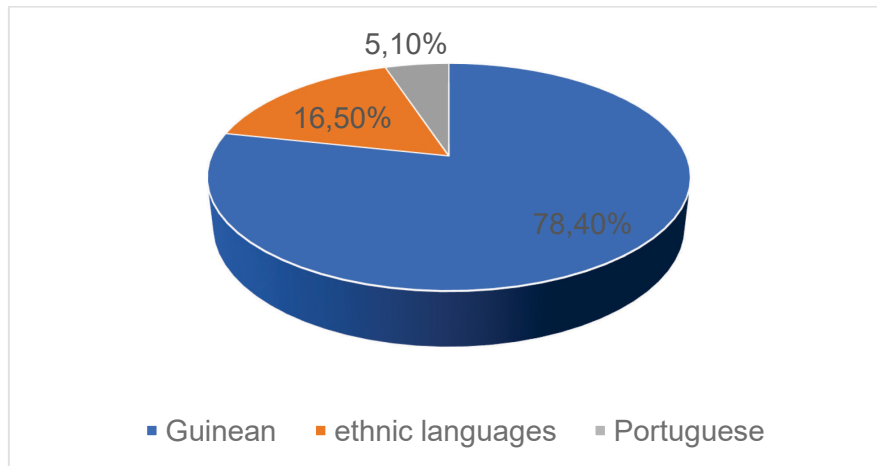


Figure 4: Language most frequently used in everyday life

Source: Prepared by the authors

The percentage of employment of Guinean language highlights the role of this language in Guinean society, although, unfortunately, there is still no appreciation by the state and even by Guineans people, who see more prestige in European languages, especially Portuguese. Regarding the use of ethnic languages in everyday life, the results revealed that this is more common in the interior, where the languages are spoken more frequently. For example, in Galomaro Cossé (a sector that is part of the Bafatá region, east of the country), as well as in most of the eastern zone, the predominant language is Fula (Pular).

We also found that 91.90% of participants feel more comfortable communicating in Guinean, and a small percentage, that is, 8.10%, feel more comfortable communicating in Portuguese, as can be seen in the graph below.

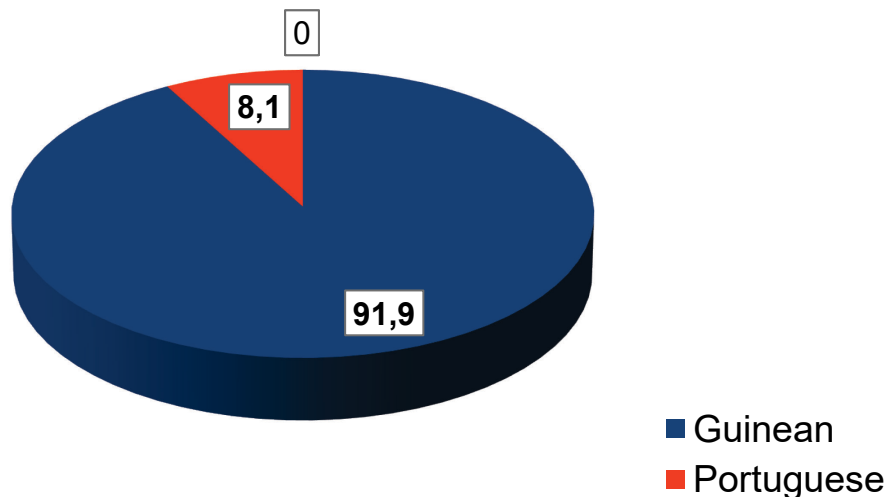


Figure 5. Participants' preferred language

Source: Prepared by the authors

As we can see, ethnic languages do not appear here, demonstrating that, for the population, although these languages are linked to culture and identity, they are hidden and are overlooked, in place of national or prestige languages. Regarding this "preference" on the part of participants in relation to certain languages, it is worth mentioning the fact that, although the questionnaires were written

in Portuguese, Guinean language was used for answers, which is in line with one of the hypotheses of this work, namely, that Guineans feel more comfortable communicating with each other, communicate in the Guinean language.

With regard to the positioning of teachers and school management on the use of the Guinean language, we observed, from the reports, that there is a linguistic policy that is somewhat oppressive, as the Portuguese language has a higher status than other languages and, when a student If you communicate in Guinean, there are some penalties, as we can see in the answers to the questionnaires.

1: “Como é obrigatório falar o português no recinto escolar e na sala de aula, ao falar crioulo pode até levar uma falta.”
(As it is mandatory to speak Portuguese on school grounds and in the classroom when speaking Creole you can even get a fault.)

2: “Pelo menos na escola em que frequentei não toleravam o uso do crioulo na sala de aulas, mas como é o hábito dos cidadãos guineenses, era impossível e infalível exigir-los de não falarem o crioulo.”
(At least in the school I attended, they did not tolerate the use of Creole in the classroom, but as is the habit of Guinean citizens, it was impossible and infallible to require them not to speak Creole.)

3: “Ficavam incomodados e irritados, pois, na sala de aula, era obrigatório falar em português e também tinham regras, se um/a aluno/a falar crioulo, pagava multa ou até mesmo era expulso na aula.”
(They were uncomfortable and irritated, because, in the classroom, it was mandatory to speak in Portuguese and there were also rules, if a student spoke Creole, they would pay a fine or even be expelled from class.)

4: “Eu pagava uma multa de 25xof ou 50xof^{xiii}
(I would pay a fine of 25xof or 50xof)

5: “A maioria dos professores não permite o uso da língua..., mas alguns não impedem.”
(Most teachers do not allow the use of language..., but some do not prevent it.)

6: “Uns me deram palmadas e houve até outros que me expulsavam da sala.”
(Some spanked me and there were even others who kicked me out of the room.)

7: “Ita dipindi di pursor ku scola. Na lembra otcha na studa na scola A, nó pursor di portuguis ta tirau fora si papia criol, pursor di matemática kila ta pu paga quadro. Mas otcha n’ muda pa scola B, eta tudjinu papial na recintu scolar ku sala de aula, si bi papialba, buta paga multa de 100fcfa.”
(It depends on the teacher and the school. I remember well when I studied at school A, (We used the letter A in order to preserve the identity of our participant’s school) the Portuguese language teacher expelled anyone who used ‘creole’, the mathematics teacher adopted another punishment, that is, whoever used “creole” was ordered to erase the slate. But when I moved to school B, they prevented us from communicating in Creole on the school grounds and in the classroom.)^{xiv}

8: “É ka ta agi bem, pabia hora ku papia kriol n recinto scolar é ta danu bah suspensão.”
(They didn’t act well, because if the person communicates in “Creole” they will be suspended from class.)

9: “Professores tinham responsáveis na sala de aulas, ou seja, alunos que fiscalizavam a quem falava crioulo na sala. Quer dizer, era obrigatório falar português.”
(Teachers had responsible people in the classroom, that is, students who supervised who spoke Creole in the classroom. I mean, it was mandatory to speak Portuguese.)

10: “Pagava multa de 100 fcfa.”
(I paid a fine of 100 fcfa.)

11: “Agiam comigo normal.”
(They acted normal to me.)

12: “Ita dipindi di pursor, mas na nó skola, maioria kata tudjinuba papia kriol. Má na nona class, no dissidi kria un lei, pa kada bias ku alguin papia kriol, i paga 25fcfa

(It depends on the teacher, but most did not prevent us from using Creole. However, in the 9th grade, we adopted a law with the aim of preventing the use of “creole” at school. Thus, when someone communicated in a language other than Portuguese, they paid a fine of 25fcfa, for each time they used “Creole”)

Table 1.Participants' reports on the positioning of teachers and management in relation to the use of the Guinean language in the school environment^{xv}

Source: Prepared by the authors

There is, however, resistance from some students and teachers, who sometimes communicate in Guinean. Furthermore, it was found that the mandatory use of Portuguese varies from school to school, as in some institutions it is common to communicate in both Portuguese and Guinean.

The records of the interviews also show an “inspection” that occurs even on the part of students, who, by chance, “break the law”. There is also mention of agreements, with the aim of prohibiting the use of the Guinean language in the classroom and in the school environment.

Therefore, according to the reports of these students, the action focuses on encouraging the learning of the Portuguese language. Below, we check what the participants reported about the presence of the Guinean language alongside Portuguese in educational institutions:

1: “Eu acho muito importante, pois é a língua mais falada e permite mais compreensão.”
(I think it is very important, as it is the most spoken language and allows for more understanding.)

2: “Eu acho que a ciência deve ser ensinada em crioulo, pois Português não tem eficiência e eficácia no sistema.”
(I think science should be taught in Creole, as Portuguese does not have efficiency and effectiveness in the system.)

3: “Na minha opinião, seria mais fácil para a comunicação e compreensão, porque temos mais domínio do crioulo.”
(In my opinion, it would be easier for communication and understanding, because we have better command of Creole.)

4: “Para mim, é bom, porque temos nas tabancas, crianças que nem crioulo compreendem, sem falar do português. Por isso, seria bom”.
(For me, it's good, because we have children in the tabancas who don't even understand Creole, not to mention Portuguese. So it would be good.)

5: “Acho que é urgente empregar essa língua no ensino e aprendizagem guineense. Pois é o que facilita mais a compreensão da matéria. Quando uma pessoa entende a matéria em crioulo dificilmente ela esquece o que aprendeu.”
(I think it is urgent to use this language in Guinean teaching and learning. This is what makes the subject easier to understand. When a person understands the material in Creole it is difficult for them to forget what they learned.)

6: “Eu acho muito importante, resgatar crioulo como uma língua para se comunicar no dia a dia, mesmo na escola ou nas instituições, porque faz parte da nossa cultura, e as vezes as pessoas se sentem mais à vontade e alegre para se expressarem em crioulo”
(I think it is very important to revive Creole as a language to communicate in everyday life, even at school or in institutions, because it is part of our culture, and sometimes people feel more comfortable and happy to express themselves. in Creole)

7: “Não, pa mi, português tem que cedo muito exigido na escola, sendo kuma i nó língua oficial i k maior importância ki kriol”
(No, in my opinion, the use of Portuguese should be required at school, as it is our official language and more important than Creole.)

8: “Não, pa pudi da más facilidade a estudantes di sibi papia utur língua, pabia crioulo nota aprendil na casa ou na vizinhança”.
(No, so that the student can communicate in another language, as we learn 'Creole' at home or in the neighborhood (community).)

9: “Seria bom. Porque na escola o que se ensina é a ciência não a língua.”
(That would be nice. Because at school what is taught is science, not language.)

Table 2: Participants' subjective opinions on the use of the Guinean language in the School Environment

Source: Prepared by the authors

Regarding the participants' opinion on the inclusion of the Guinean language in the school environment, the majority indicate that they are favorable and also emphasize that using only the Portuguese language does not facilitate the assimilation of content. Furthermore, they recognize that the Guinean language is the wealth of the people and that, considering that many people feel more comfortable expressing themselves in the national language, it would make sense to allow its use in the school environment. However, some refute this view, that is, they do not agree with the use of a language other than Portuguese in educational establishments. According to these participants, Guinean is less important than the Portuguese language^{xvi}. Participant number 7 deserves to be highlighted, who, although he presented his answer in Guinean, defended the importance of using the Portuguese language, which would be the only official language in the country.

Finally, in relation to the officialization of Guinean, we found quite divergent opinions, as some have positive attitudes and are in favor of the officialization of the language, but others have a contrary position and do not agree with the officialization. In the view of the latter, this would have consequences for those who wish to live with fellow countrymen from Portuguese-speaking African Countries (PALOP) and other nations that also use Portuguese. Below are some excerpts from our participants' responses.

1: “Língua é poder. Acho necessário os professores ensinarem na língua crioulo, porque facilita e contribui na melhoria do aproveitamento escolar por parte de alguns alunos com grande dificuldade de interpretar um texto escrito em português.”
(Language is power. I think it is necessary for teachers to teach in the Creole language, because it facilitates and contributes to improving the academic performance of some students who have great difficulty interpreting a text written in Portuguese.)

2: “Por mim, não é bom para nós, porque somos obrigados a buscar o ensino superior de qualidade no exterior, sobretudo em Portugal e no Brasil (países falantes da Língua Portuguesa).”
(For me, it is not good for us, because we are forced to seek quality higher education abroad, especially in Portugal and Brazil (Portuguese-speaking countries).)

3: “É muito importante oficializar a língua Bissau guineense, uma vez que é a língua do povo, ou seja, é a língua do dia a dia e também é a língua mais falada no território guineense.”
(It is very important to make the Bissau Guinean language official since it is the language of the people, that is, it is the language of everyday life and is also the most spoken language in Guinean territory.)

4: “Português é língua do colonizador, oficialização do crioulo pode ser como uma conquista e ruptura com legados dos invasores, colonizadores.”
(Portuguese is the language of the colonizer, officialization of Creole can be like a conquest and rupture with legacies of the invaders and colonizers.)

5: “Acho legal! A Guiné Bissau como um país independente já, que pudesse ter a própria língua, como oficial também, incluindo português e não tendo a língua colonizador como a única língua oficial, cá em Bissau, as pessoas falam mais o crioulo e o compreendem melhor em relação ao português, quase a população guineense não fala a língua portuguesa, então seria bom e muito melhor que empregassem o crioulo como a língua oficial, juntamente com o português.”
(I think it's cool! Guinea Bissau as an independent country now, which could have its own language, official too, including Portuguese, and not have the colonizer language as the only official language, here in Bissau, people speak more Creole and understand it better in relation to Portuguese, the Guinean population almost does not speak Portuguese, so it would be good and much better if they used Creole as the official language, altogether with Portuguese.)

6: “N’achal muito normal. Principalmente na escola, i mindjor propi opta criol suma lingua de ensinamento, pa mindjor percepção de alunos. Na instituição de stadu, Nô ka obrigado eleva utru lingua Mais de ki de nós. Alen di kila, si oficializadu, ina sedu lingua ku na permite pa tudo mundo sta na pé de igualdade”

(I think it's very normal. Especially at school, I believe it is better to choose Creole as the teaching language, so that students can assimilate the content more easily. In state institutions, we are not obliged to value any language other than our own. Furthermore, making Creole official will allow everyone to be on an equal footing.)

7: "Oficializal i na sedu bom, pabia, suma ku nô sibi, li na Bissau, si bu bai pa passa mensagem, si b misti pa um 70% ou 80% ntindiu, bu ten k papia kriol."

(Making it official would be beneficial, because, as we know, here in Bissau, it is extremely important to use "Creole" so that 70% or 80% of the population can understand the content when transmitting a message to the community.)

8: "Panha manera d odja, ika nada mal, pabia país tene djintis analfabetus i ku idosos kuka obi utur língua além d criol"
(In my opinion, it's not bad, because in our country we have illiterate people and elderly people who don't have command of any language other than "Creole.")

9: "N'ka concorda, pabia si nó faci kila, nó kana tene dominiu di purdiguis. Suma ku nó sibi, nó obrigau konvivi ku guintis kuta papia portuguis k sta fora."

(I don't agree, because by doing this, we will not have command of the Portuguese language. As we know, we are forced to live with people abroad who also communicate in Portuguese.)

10: "Nau, Pabia guineenses tem ku aprende papia português e mais vantajoso a nível internacional"
(No, because Guineans should learn the Portuguese language, it is advantageous at an international level.)

11: "Seria importante. Porém, temos que começar ainda pela criação da gramática, porque até agora a língua crioula não tem gramática."

(It would be important. However, we still have to start with the creation of grammar, because until now the Creole language has no grammar.)

Table 3: Participants' position on the officialization of the Guinean language

Source: Prepared by the authors

If we establish a comparison of the participants' responses to the notes defended by Craig (n.d., *apud* Couto, 1996), we will have the following conclusions: a) those who are not in favor of the officialization of "Guinean" defend the existence of a "monolingualism in the dominant language" (Portuguese); b) those who claim the coexistence of two official languages, Portuguese and "Creole", emphasize the application of "full bilingualism". Another information that deserves to be highlighted in the participants' response is that some emphasize that Portuguese is the language of the colonizers^{xvii}, therefore, based on this vision, the officialization of "Creole" would be a great achievement, as it would exclude yet another of the many traces left behind by the colonizers.

As we saw in the previous table, in addition to the variation in lexia "criol" and "kriol", it is possible to verify a second case in the responses of participants 8 and 9, that is, the first uses *dj* in the first syllable of words "djintis" (people) and the second uses *gu* in the first syllable "guintis". In the feedback, we noted the influence of extralinguistic factors (age and level of education) on the occurrence of variations. Therefore, "criol" lexia is more frequent in participants with a lower level of education, while "kriol" is common among those with a higher level of education. However, in people's vocabulary, the first case (djintis) is used by younger people and the second (guintis) by older people.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The results of our research revealed that the Guinean language occupies a primary role in the country's society, being acquired, almost always, in the family environment, although, sometimes, it is not the first language of the participants, who often speak ethnic languages as first acquired.

Despite the country being plurilingual and Guineans being multilingual, there is a predominance of interactions in Guinean, which serves as the national and inter-ethnic language throughout the territory. Portuguese, the country's only official language, is not a language of family or everyday communication, being restricted only to the educational and official sphere.

90% of those interviewed indicated that Guinean is the language with the greatest “linguistic comfort”, that is, the vast majority of users prefer to communicate in this language than in Portuguese or any other language present in the country.

When investigating the teaching context in Guinea-Bissau, despite what was previously revealed, there is an imposition of the use of the Portuguese language, which was manifested in the reports of several participants. Furthermore, there is oppression and disincentive to employment for Guineans.

The national policy of valuing the official language, Portuguese, and devaluing the national language, Guinean, means that there is even divergence among the population, manifested in the varied opinions of the participants, who positioned themselves against or in favor of the officialization of the Guinean language and implementation of bilingual education.

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Received on July 4, 2023. Accepted on April 18, 2024.

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i As we present a view contrary to the generalized labeling of these languages as “creoles”, in subsequent mentions, we will use more specific denominations, related to the countries, such as, for example, “guineense”, for Guinean “creole”, “caboverdiano”, for “creole” of Cape Verde, and “santomense”, for the “creole” of São Tomé and Príncipe.

ii In Portuguese: “Distingue-se na origem um crioulo intramuros e um crioulo extramuros. Trata-se de uma distinção social. Corresponde à distinção entre o crioulo dos cristãos, mestiços ou assimilados que viviam no interior das praças e o crioulo dos grumetes, africanos livres que trabalhavam ao serviço dos portugueses: eles cumpriam as tarefas de intermediários no comércio, mas também vários ofícios tais como carpinteiro, calafate... Os grumetes viviam agrupados no pé da tabanca, a paliçada que separava a cidade do mato, ou em bairros reservados”.

iii In the original: “A partir dos anos vinte do século XX ele começou a ser estigmatizado e a sua utilização acabou por ser interdita pelas autoridades coloniais, o mesmo acontecendo com as línguas das comunidades etnolinguísticas. O kriol passou a ser visto como uma língua de ‘não civilizado’ e aquele que falasse português era considerado ‘civilizado’”.

iv In the original: “1) Monolinguismo na língua dominante; 2) Bilinguismo “monoliterate”, em que a língua vernácula da criança é admitida nos estágios iniciais para se chegar à escrita na língua dominante; 3) Bilinguismo “monoliterate”, em que se usam literalmente duas línguas plenamente, menos na escrita; 4) Bilinguismo parcial em que se admite a língua vernácula do aluno inclusive para a escrita, mas só quando se trata de assuntos relativos ao seu contexto; 5) Bilinguismo pleno; 6) Monolinguismo na língua vernácula.”.

v In the original: “O governo comunista, para facilitar ao povo o acesso à escrita, fez em 1955 uma reforma ortográfica: 515 caracteres e 54 partículas foram simplificadas, passando de uma média de 16 traços a uma média de 8 traços [...] Essa simplificação, reduzindo o número de traços, certamente favorece o aprendizado e a memorização dos caracteres.”.

vi In the original: “Em 1923, Mustafa Kamel, levado à presidência da república por um movimento laico e nacionalista, lança a ‘revolução linguística’ (dil devrimi). Tratava-se de modernizar a língua turca, suprimindo dela todas as influências muçulmanas e otomanas, e as principais decisões foram: *primeiro*, passar do alfabeto árabe [...] a um alfabeto inspirado no alfabeto latino [...]; *segundo*, suprir o ensino do árabe do persa nas escolas [...]; *terceiro*, substituir sistematicamente as palavras tomadas de empréstimo árabe ou persa por termos de origem turca [...]; quarto, pedir aos cidadãos turcos que adotassem nomes de origem turca: por exemplo: Mustafa Kemal mudará seu nome para Atatürk, ‘o pai da Turquia’”.

vii It is worth noting, at this point, that the questions were produced in Portuguese, in the Guinean variety. Furthermore, to mention the Guinean language, we use the label most commonly used in the community, which is “creole”, “kriol” or “Guinean creole”.

viii We carry out our interviews virtually, using digital tools such as WhatsApp, email and Google Meet. Guineans residing in Guinea-Bissau and Brazil participated in the research.

ix The research went through the Brazilian Research Ethics Committee, having been registered and approved under Process number 65894022.7.0000.5504.

x In Brazil, it corresponds to Elementary School II.

xi High school.

xii This fact, although little documented, could explain why ethnic languages and the Guinean language, although not supported by government linguistic policies, still enjoy vitality in the territory of Guinea-Bissau, having not been supplanted by Portuguese, the official and prestigious language, as occurred in other former colonies.

xiii Local currency.

xiv Answer as given in Guinean.

xv Participants answered the questions in Portuguese or Guinean. In parentheses, the English translation.

xvi This phenomenon of valuing the Portuguese language to the detriment of ethnic languages and Guinean was confirmed by the study by Rubio and Cá (2019).

xvii This issue was also confirmed in the study carried out by Rubio and Cá (2019).