

# Producing Silencing: Portuguese Teaching/Learning in Rural Schools in the Italian Colonial Region, Brazil

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**Abstract** The teaching of Portuguese in schools in Italian immigration regions in Brazil became compulsory after 1937 as determined by Getúlio Vargas's dictatorial government. This also occurred in the colonial region, in the south of Brazil, although children only spoke Italian dialects in rural areas. After Brazil entered World War II, Italian was prohibited and Portuguese was to replace it. Using accounts recorded in Memory Banks and Historical Archives, the objective of this paper is to analyze testimonies of students and teachers of that time, and try to reconstruct this subtractive teaching. Some teachers, however, used the Italian dialect of the region (*Talian*) to explain the Portuguese language. On the other hand, some pupils mentioned punishments that were given because they used Italian words. It is concluded that school had a crucial role in spreading the Portuguese language, and in starting the process of silencing Italian, which has been highly successful so far, despite a few attempts to rehabilitate *Talian*.

**Keywords:** Bilingualism, language and culture, history and language teaching

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## 1. Introduction

This text is a partial result of the research *Silencing*, developed within the University of Caxias do Sul (UCS), which aims to investigate the historical process of the silencing of Italian dialects spoken in the Italian Colonial Region (hereinafter ICR) of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, focusing on school policies and practices of the teaching of Portuguese as an additional language – or rather, a replacement language, as we shall see – and a majority one.

The Italian Colonial Region is formed by the older colonies: Caxias, Dona Isabel and Conde d'Eu. In this region today there are several municipalities, including Caxias do Sul, Bento Gonçalves, Garibaldi, Carlos Barbosa, Farroupilha, São Marcos, Monte Belo do Sul, and Santa Teresa. In this geographic division, we study, in this text, narratives of students and teachers of rural areas at the time when teaching in Portuguese became compulsory (1937-1950), seeking to understand how and whether the process of silencing of Italian dialects took place.

We used the methodology of Oral History and Historical Documentary Analysis, as well as bibliographical research. Our work was based on interviews from the memory bank of the Historical and Cultural Memory Institute of the University of Caxias do Sul, which preserves testimonies of community leaders, religious leaders and educational leaders from the period studied and the João Spadari Adami Municipal Historical Archive, in Caxias do Sul.

We analyzed these accounts and transcribed excerpts of them during the course of the investigation<sup>1</sup>.

Our theoretical basis is drawn from studies of Applied Linguistics and from Cultural History, referenced throughout the work, and among the main bibliographical references on education in the Italian colonization region, we used Caprara [2], Caprara and Luchese [3], and Luchese [33]. We also consulted works on cultural studies and linguistic aspects of the ICR, such as Frosi; Mioranza [18,22], Faggion [12,20], Frosi [19] and Frosi et al. [17,20], among others.

This article, after taking up some aspects about the learning of languages and cultures, begins by explaining the historical context in which the events of integration and adoption of language take place, focusing on the Italian immigration, discusses the education developed in the period, mentions the nationalization of education program, then goes on to reflect on the prohibition of the language and the influences that this prohibition had on its speakers.

### 1 - Learning languages and cultures

It is well-known that there is a close relationship between language(s) and culture(s). Kramersch ([29]: 3-4) shows that language expresses, embodies and symbolizes cultural reality. Duranti ([9]: 2) presents linguistic anthropology as "the study of language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice," and explains that

<sup>1</sup> Pavlenko and Lantolf [35] use more or less the same method, and justify their procedure. For our part, we would have no other access to the experiences of people from that time.

[...] linguistic anthropologists see the subjects of their study, that is, **speakers**, first and above all as **social actors**, that is, members of particular, interestingly complex, communities, each organized in a variety of social institutions and through a network of intersecting but not necessarily overlapping sets of expectations, beliefs, and moral values about the world. ([9]: 3)

It is based on the relationship between language and culture that we analyze the silencing of Italian dialects spoken in southernmost Brazil, and the expansion of the Portuguese language. Portuguese, besides being the majority language and the official language of the country, was also the dominant language in an incipient urban and industrial culture, as opposed to a rural and agricultural culture, which, in ICR, was expressed in Italian dialects.

Therefore, we see the desire to speak Portuguese essentially linked to the desire to integrate into new cultures. Immigrants wanted their children to speak Portuguese. In the mastery of this language, they saw a condition for integration and a stimulus for social ascent.

Tittone ([42]: 45) had already said that "true bilingualism entails not only the working knowledge of two linguistic codes, but, more deeply, the highly personalized possession of two systems of thought, and therefore of two cultures."

For Grosjean ([28]: 157), however, bilingualism and biculturalism are not coextensive. Different cultures, the author says, come into contact with each other, just like languages, and people adjust to another culture to a greater or lesser degree ([28]: 158-160), the most common situation of a person who combines traits different cultures ([28]: 160). There is, thus, multiculturalism. That is: people are in contact with many cultures.

We also find support for this work in Pavlenko and Lantolf ([35]: 155), based on the principles of sociocultural theory, they see the additional language learner as someone who seeks to integrate into (an)other culture(s). In fact, the authors see

[...] language learning not as the acquisition of a new set of grammatical, lexical, and phonological forms but as a struggle of concrete socially constituted and always situated beings to participate in the symbolically mediated lifeworld [...] of another culture. ([35]: 155)

Kramsch [30], too, talking about the socio-discursive constructions of self in L2 learning, reminds us that, based on Vygotsky's ideas, views of language as a pre-constructed mental activity have been reformulated.

In sociocultural theory, linguistic signs and psychological processes do not precede their use in social contexts; on the contrary, it is social activity, and its material forms of social and cultural mediation, that precede the emergence of individual forms of consciousness. ([30]: 133)

Lemke ([32]: 72) relates language and identity. As regards language, he reminds us that "language in use is always language-within-activity: socially and culturally meaningful, directly observable behavior (...)" - that is, there is no way to analyze what an individual says about something outside the general frame of reference of that individual. Lemke himself says: "Speaking is not possible without the constitution and construal of what we believe, what we value, and where we find ourselves in the systems of social classification." (Lemke 2004: 72) Language, therefore, is linked to the action of the

individual, understood as the set of his social practices, seen in the context of the culture(s) that influence(s) the group to which he belongs.

With regard to identity, Lemke [32] takes a stance with those who, like Cuche [6], support the idea of a dynamic, adaptable, changeable identity, understood as a set of identity processes. In fact, says Lemke:

What else is an *identity* but the performance, verbally and nonverbally, of a possible constellation of attitudes, beliefs, and values that has a recognizable coherence by the criteria of some community? Of course identity is complex; we define it on many timescales of behavioral coherence. There are the identities we assume in each particular activity type in which we engage: the identities we perform in the conference room, in the playroom, and in the bedroom. There are also the identities we maintain, or construct, for ourselves and ask others to uphold for us, across settings: our gender activities, our social class activities, our age group identities. ([32]: 72)

This dynamic identity (defined by Lemke 2004: 73 as "work-in-progress") is intrinsically linked to the environment in which the individual lives, and the way he expresses himself. To live in a community, we need to interact with diversity – that of ages, of social classes, of similar groups and of different groups, of ethnicities, of religions. Individual responses to this diversity form identities (see [32]: 74), and it is no exaggeration to say that the desire to belong to a given group in a community can be a stage in building a new - and more convenient - identity. In fact, it is Lemke again who ponders:

Many of us simply do not live our lives entirely within the institutions and milieux of a single culture or social class and, even when we do, the forces of social control they exert to deny us wider latitude in our behavior grow weaker as we are presented with more alternatives by larger society. ([32]: 75)

With regard to this building of identities, it is no exaggeration to recall what Ochs ([34]: 108) says about the importance of knowing how to use a language: "Vital to competent participation in social groups is the ability to understand how people use language and other symbolic tools to construct social situations" ([34]: 108).

In the case of the Italian Colonization Region of Rio Grande do Sul, the limits imposed by country life – living off agriculture, managing poverty, facing a great deal of work – were also marked by the language that united this peasant community, the Italian dialect. It is understandable, then, that they all wished to learn Portuguese, the majority language, which would give them access to other cultures. Quoting Lemke again, when we speak a new language, "we add new dimensions to our Selves; we expand, through the use of the language, our repertory of possible identities and ways of being human" ([32]: 84).

Ochs [34] points out in this regard, that "Language socialization is rooted in the notion that the process of acquiring a language is part of a much larger process of becoming a person in society" ([34]: 106).

Therefore, we see learning Portuguese in ICR, by the immigrant and/or his children, as inextricably linked to the desire to participate in a homeland that had given them one of their greatest assets, within their original peasant culture itself, in Italy, which was the chance to buy a plot

of land and work for oneself and one's family, and not for a boss (on the importance of land, see [26]).

Pavlenko and Lantolf [35] analyze (first person) reports on second language learning, with regard to the participation of learners in a new community and construction (or reconstruction) of these speakers' self. The second aspect that they take into account bears a resemblance to the situation that we are analyzing: the relationship between the dominant and the minority language, in such a way that "the dominant language affords both power and prestige to its speakers" ([35]: 162).

Unlike the idea of *person*, the *self* is assumed, as "the still center of experience" to which various conscious states, including organization of memory, perception, and agency, are attributed" ([35]: 163). The authors, therefore, show that formulating the question is "what happens to the self when an individual moves from participation in the discursive practices of one culture, in this case, the native culture, to those of another culture" ([35]: 163).

In these processes of loss and reconstruction, the reports analyzed by Pavlenko and Lantolf [35] allow them to problematize the notion of native speaker as well as stating that agency is essential to the learning of a second language:

While the first language and subjectivities are an indisputable given, the new ones are arrived at by choice. Agency is crucial at the point where the individuals must not just start memorizing a dozen new words and expressions but have to decide on whether to initiate a long, painful, in exhaustive and, for some, never-ending process of self-translation. ([35]: 169-170).

What distinguishes our analysis of these reports of Pavlenko and Lantolf [35] is essentially the fact that, in the Italian Region of Colonization in 1930, was mandatory to learn another language at school. More than that: obligation to speak another language, in all situations the community, and not to speak the native language if that language was Italian, German or Japanese. It was speaking an unfamiliar language - or remaining silent.

## 2 - Characteristics of Italian Immigration in Rio Grande do Sul: Italian dialects of origin

Rio Grande do Sul is a state in the southernmost part of Brazil, and received German immigrants (from 1824 on) and Italian ones (from 1875 on). There were other migratory contingents, such as Polish, French, and Russian. Previously people had entered the state from various regions of Africa, as a result of the slavery that was widespread in Brazil until the nineteenth century. So Rio Grande do Sul is a multicultural and multi-ethnic state, as can be seen, and the languages of origin continued for a long time in the immigration regions, through various dialects.

Italian immigrants coming from Veneto, Lombardia, Trentino Alto Adige and Friuli Venezia Giulia were randomly assigned, in order of arrival, to plots of land demarcated by the government [22].

According to Frosi and Mioranza [22], the Italian dialects spoken were Venetian (Vicentian, Paduan), Lombard (Cremonese, Milanese, Bergamasque), Trentino, and also of another language, Friulian<sup>2</sup>.

Due to the need for communication between speakers of different dialects and sub-dialects, there emerged a supradialectal variety, Koiné (see [18,22]), for communication between groups. This common variety was also called Southern Brazilian Venetian (see [41]). From the name given by the speakers themselves, this dialect is also called *Talian*<sup>3</sup>. This dialectal variety is still spoken, and some of its speakers would like it to have the status of official language. The state of Rio Grande do Sul, by means of law 13.178, has already declared *Talian* to be Historical and Cultural Heritage, and some cities, like Serafina Correa, have already adopted it as a co-official language, alongside Portuguese. Recently (on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014), *Talian* was officially recognized as a language of reference, by Brazilian government.

In regions where it is spoken, *Talian* meets the communicative needs that Romaine ([39]: 33) gives to L (Low) language: day to day use, conversation with family, friends, colleagues, folk literature. Portuguese is the language of formal situations, of education, of the media, of work.

*Talian* retains important morphosyntactic aspects [12,22] but, as to its lexis, the main feature of word formation is borrowing, and its most important source of neologisms is Portuguese (see [7,20]). At least in the initial years of immigration and in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the dialects coexisted with Koine and the Portuguese language, the latter still little-used in everyday communication. The children were in contact also with Standard Italian, used in the first schools for teaching reading, including with the use of brochures supplied by the Italian government. In churches, the priests' homily was probably enunciated in Standard Italian, while the ritual itself was in Latin. That was the linguistic situation in the region, when teaching in Portuguese became compulsory. The documents allow us to say that the rural areas had more intense use of Italian dialects, compared to the urban areas, including among children.

## 3 - Education in the Italian Colonial Region

Luchese [33] analyzes the initiatives regarding education in the region, dividing them into three main types: the first type were the ethnic-community schools, also called Italian schools, from ca. 1875 until 1920. In the urban area, these were run by Mutual Aid Associations, being provided with books, and in some periods, with teachers sent by the Italian government. These schools were propagators of the feeling of *italianità* ("italianness"). However, the schools in the rural area were initiatives of the families themselves, who chose from among themselves the person best qualified to take on the position of teacher and, moreover, in a joint community effort, constructed a school building, assuming responsibility for its maintenance and payment of the teacher's wages. This state of affairs did not last long and these schools were gradually taken over by municipalities, by subsidizing the teacher (who had to teach in Portuguese), and being free of charge, as a response to the numerous requests from communities for the installation of *public schools*. The role of the state and municipalities in implementing the public network was brought about by

2 Frosi and Mioranza [22] carried out their bold and extensive research in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They also found dialectal islands, with speakers of different Italian dialects and Friulian ones in rural areas. It can be seen, then, that the different dialects were still in use up to a hundred years after the beginning of immigration.

3 Still spoken in rural areas, *talian* was at one time stigmatized. However, today it is not the Venetian dialect that is stigmatized, but Portuguese spoken with traces of accent (see [20]).

means of numerous norms regarding its organization. The third mode, religious schools, resulted from the initiative of religious congregations, established from 1890 onwards. They were of considerable importance, be it due to the spread of religiosity through the formation of clerics and nuns, be it because they were responsible for the education of many political and economic leaders of the region.

The school, as the bearer and disseminator of culture, was announced as fundamental in the speeches of authorities. School education was considered one of the main focal points for building national unity. Among the requirements of the teaching program, at local level what was reiterated in the speeches of public authorities was that teaching should be carried out in Portuguese. However, most teachers were immigrants or their descendants. It is undeniable that, even if they had learned Portuguese, their accent persisted in the daily routine of lessons. The Italian dialects spoken by students were in some way corresponded to by some of the teachers, especially in the first decades after colonization and in rural areas.

On the other hand, one might think, from the records found, that teachers were the first to be required, because of the policies of subsidy and / or of carrying out public contests, to become nationalized and master (at least minimally) the Portuguese language. For students, especially those from rural areas, who spoke only the Italian dialect before they went to school, the acquisition of the second language was often marked by difficulties. As they attended school, children were educated in Portuguese, thus becoming bilingual. Alice Gasperin, a teacher, wrote of this: "We used to read both Portuguese and Italian. But our teacher could not explain anything. We did not understand what we were reading. [...] My best teacher was my mother." ([24], p. 74). Different readings and languages also circulated in catechism and religious practices. The same author reports that "[...] there was a great deal of confusion. At school, the teacher taught us prayers in Portuguese. In church we prayed in Latin. At home our mother taught us to pray in grammatical Italian. In our day-to-day, we spoke the dialect." ([23], p. 29). The linguistic and cultural wealth described by Gasperin [23,24], was undermined by the Vargas government and its nationalization policy.

#### 4 – The nationalization of education laws

Getúlio Vargas took power in 1930 by means of a coup, and one of his main campaigns was that of nationalization. As a result, Portuguese became the compulsory language in religious cults, in ceremonies, in broadcasts, in rallies - and in education (see, in this regard, [1,20,27,36,38,40]). There was the belief, apparently, that the presence of a single language would ensure national unity.

In schools the result was two different realities, depending on whether they were urban or rural, according to Luchese and Faggion [15] In urban areas, in 1930, Portuguese was widely used, although the Venetian dialect (that is, the Koiné or Talian) was also spoken; children already spoke Portuguese when they started school. We can see the presence of bilingualism and diglossia. On the other hand, in rural areas the situation was quite different: the Venetian dialect was the linguistic variety in use, and Portuguese was little spoken. There were many children who had contact with Portuguese for the first time at

school. School, therefore, became a center for the dissemination of the Portuguese language (see [11,15]).

However, if Vargas's laws did not cause much disturbance in schools, among the adult population there are striking reports, some quite grievous. In rural areas, adults hardly spoke Portuguese. There are reports of fear and imprisonment. Pedro considers that

The prohibition to use any language other than Portuguese was, for many descendants of Germans and Italians [...] a difficult order to follow. Accustomed to using the language of their parents in friendships, in their homes, in church, at school, in trade, in short in the place where they lived, they were suddenly obliged to speak the language of the country where they lived. [...] The feeling was fear, and therefore it had to be silenced. ([37], p. 09).

This silence, accompanied by many fears, had certain consequences in ICR, because as Giron says:

The seizure of weapons, books and objects that could refer to Italy affected the population as a whole. It was forbidden to speak in a foreign language in public places. The process of forced nationalization hits the region with the force of an earthquake, substantially modifying family relationships and old habits. ([25], p. 116).

If the first legislation on nationalization advised the practice of dissemination of Portuguese as an official language from 1930 on, in 1938 this policy was intensified, and in 1942, with Brazil's entry into World War II, it effectively became a prohibition. As Fáveri ([16], p 58) says, "When Brazil broke off diplomatic relations with the Axis, in January 1942, the repression went beyond the sphere of education and raged upon the population of foreign origin: the language came to be criminalized."

#### 5 - The school as a space to teach / learn Portuguese

The school constituted a privileged space for the teaching and learning of Portuguese. In the classroom, some students had, for the first time, contact with the majority language. They certainly understood, no matter how difficult or unknown it was, that the Portuguese language was seen as the most important. According to Romaine:

As one of the society's main socializing instruments, the school plays a powerful role in exerting social control over its pupils. It endorses mainstream, and largely middle-class values. Children who do not come to school with the kind of cultural background supported in the schools are likely to experience conflict. ([39]: 242).

As Luchese [33] shows, the school was a in a place of negotiations and challenges for children of ICR.

The story of Dom Benedito Zorzi<sup>4</sup>, who became Bishop of Caxias do Sul, is exemplary. We have the testimony of an important person remembering his beginnings at school and after that.

Dom Benedito recalls that his first school had an Italian teacher. He also remembers that he learned to read with a bilingual book, Portuguese-Italian, but he discerns that the language he spoke every day was different; it was the Venetian dialect.

4 The report of Benedito D. Zorzi is recorded and registered in the archives of the Institute of Historical and Cultural Memory.

I (Interviewer) - Was it in 1918 that you started to go to school? DB (Dom Benedito) - In 1919 and 20, in that school that they opened. [...] I - And did [that school] teach in Portuguese or Italian? DB - It was a Brazilian school in Brazil, run by an Italian who didn't speak Portuguese. She must have understood something, and we had the bilingual reading book, with half-page in Italian and half in Portuguese, but printed in Italy for the children of immigrants in Brazil. It just so happens that we did not know Italian or Portuguese, because our language is another one, called Venetian. Here people say "*parlar talian*", but its correct name is Venetian. I - But was the Italian that was in the books grammatical<sup>5</sup>? DB - Grammatical, yes. There was no dialect. (ZORZI, 1988).

The Bishop also remembers that the main thing was teaching to read. That was the main concern of the school. It seems that the pupils developed special skills for learning to read, combining the languages with which they had contact.

E - Did she teach Italian grammar? D - She taught us to read. She didn't worry too much about grammar, verbs, that stuff. It was learning to read. So we gradually learned because after all, a little Italian, a little dialect, some Portuguese. Italian, we heard the priest who preached at Mass in Italian. He spoke grammar [standard Italian]. So we understood something, so much so that in those two years I was promoted with other classmates [...]. E - Was the teacher born here in Brazil? D - No, Italian. (ZORZI, 1988).

Dom Benedito remembers well the bilingual book that was used in school. However, it seems that the Italian cultural elements were not reinforced:

E - Do you remember if along with teaching to read, teaching a little math, you were taught anything about Italian culture? A - No. I don't think so. Of course, that book was made by Italians and we could see that the translation was a thing made with an Italian mentality, it was not not Brazilian. Passages, etc., as if it were in Italy. But to this day I admire the concern, it must have been the leaders of the colony that were interested ... I admire the leaders of the colony who were interested in having those children learn the two languages, Italian and Portuguese. (ZORZI, 1988).

And, according to his testimony, there really was interest in having children learn Portuguese even in those distant years, 1919 and 1920:

E - Was there interest in learning Portuguese? D - There was, particularly because, I suppose, because who would print the bilingual book for people who are in Brazil? There must have been some arrangement. I do not believe that it was the Italian government that had the bilingual book made for those who had immigrated. I don't know for certain. It's just my guess. (ZORZI, 1988).

Dom Benedito also remembers World War II and the prohibition of speaking Italian. He understands the futility of the process of wanting to force someone to speak a language. He specifically understands the difficulty that it must have been to speak Portuguese in a community that used only Italian dialects as the language of communication.

Now, sometimes, the war came, the last, decrees, prohibiting people from speaking Italian, German,

Japanese. That, to tell you the truth, that was a great blunder by whoever did that because you can't force anybody to speak by means of a decree - they have to learn the language. And how were these settlers in this land here, going to learn Portuguese? Living crowded together, a bit isolated because the biggest city, at that time, was Caxias, but the streets of Caxias, I remember, what you heard spoken there was [Italian] dialect. Most of the people spoke dialect. (...) In the parish - all life revolved around the parish - the priest spoke only Italian, because nobody understood another language. (ZORZI, 1988).

We thus have an important testimony of three of the facts that we draw attention to here: the ethnic schools of the early colonization, the wish that the Portuguese language be learned, and the time in which Italian could not be spoken. This condition of prohibition of foreign dialects and the imposition of the teaching / use of Portuguese produced effacement, embarrassment, stigmatization and linguistic prejudices.

Other interviews are also very enlightening. As the respondent Aleixo Piazza recounts "[...] forbade us to speak in Italian. Everyone was concerned, in the schools, in the shops. They spoke as they could, badly and foully / crudely but they spoke Portuguese. [...] The priest warned people at church, the teachers warned them at school, the traders / shopkeepers in the shops." (PIAZZA, 1984).

Yet another interviewee, Virginia Dall'Alba Novello, states that "there was a ban, but so strict that they even put old men in jail." (NOVELLO, 1986). Another interviewee, Terezinha Ravello Carra, born in 1936, attended school at the height of the nationalization practices and recalled that, at home and among children, they routinely spoke Italian dialect, but never at school. It was Portuguese. And she concluded "[...] there they spoke, even if it was all mixed up, but they had to give the answer in Portuguese." (CARRA, 1988).

Regina Maria Garbin, a teacher, recalled that, when she was a pupil, in the 1920s, it was common to use Italian at home and also at school. She recalled that her teacher resorted to the use of Italian dialect and often said "[We spoke] Italian and there was no problem, the teacher did not tell us off, [...], I know that many, many times, she herself spoke in Italian, because there was no other way. She said that a person does not learn another language so easily." (GARBIN, no date). However, when she started teaching in the late 1930s, Regina says that times were different. She recounts that they had to keep an eye on the children even during the break. She recounted: "at playtime we had to be careful because they spoke Italian. [...] Yes, we had to call their attention." It was a function of the teacher, laid down in law, to make sure they used Portuguese. Regina also commented that "there was a time when it was forbidden. So people, especially the older ones, they almost always stay at home." The home environment was a haven for those who had not learned Portuguese.

There was not only pressure to learn the language. It appears that there are also cultural pressures, through the teaching of music, for example. Various strategies were created and implemented through public educational policies to regulate and disseminate the teaching of Portuguese and new cultures in schools, especially during the years from 1930 to 1945, the time that the government

5 The two speakers use the term "grammatical Italian" to refer to standard Italian.

of Getúlio Vargas lasted. Among these strategies was the valuing of teaching choir singing. Juliana Lamb 6, a teacher, taught music and worked in the period from 1938 to 1980. Teaching music, especially in this period of choir singing, suited the nationalizing ideals that Vargas aimed to achieve by means of the schools.

As Juliana Lamb relates, teaching aimed at "Children learning to sing anthems. That was the main reason of Villa Lobos, that was it, to sing anthems. It was the first thing he taught." (Lamb, 1991). The singing of anthems was complemented by other popular songs and civic-nationalist ones. All to be sung in Portuguese. And Juliana also informs us that "we had the official anthems, the National anthem, the anthem of Independence, that of the flag, of the Republic, of Rio Grande do Sul, all indispensable." (Lamb, 1991).

In the municipal sphere, the decrees encouraging and making compulsory the teaching of music (choir singing) also had repercussions. In Caxias, by means of Circular No. 1 of 7<sup>th</sup> May 1941 it was established that every day, at the beginning of the school day, students should sing the National Anthem and at the end of the day's activities, they should sing the first two verses of the Anthem of the Flag. It recommended that "the teacher should direct and accompany the singing, guiding them and transmitting to them the proper emotion. [...] Students should stand proudly with their outstretched arms close to their bodies in a respectful stance, indicative of the formation of a patriotic awareness." [4]. It recommended that on Saturdays the singing of anthems should be accompanied by a great civic cult, with all the classes together. For the teachers, it required them to remain facing the students giving them the "best example of feeling what you are teaching." Concerned about possible accents and 'incorrect' singing, the circular also remarked that "the teacher should observe very carefully, not only the music, but also, and in particular, the pronunciation of words, avoiding distortions or bad habits." [4]. Also in Decree 43, which established the Program of Education for Municipal Schools in Caxias, it was ordained that "in municipal schools music education will be limited to patriotic songs and school songs for the recreation of the pupils themselves" (Decree 43..., 1943, p. 41) and ruled that the teaching of the National Anthem and that of the Flag should be emphasized.

In the experience of the teacher Estra Boff Tessari<sup>7</sup>, the Vargas period was difficult, especially during the years 1942 to 1945.

In President Getúlio Vargas's government, during the Great World War it was forbidden to speak Italian. Someone reported me to the City Council because I spoke Italian to the pupils. I was called before the mayor to explain myself. I introduced myself and explained that to teach Portuguese I had first to speak Italian and then translate the words, because they did not learn, so I was accused of incompetence. (TESSARI, no date).

The school, it can be inferred from reports, was, for many children, the space in which a cultural 'shock' took place not only because it was their first contact with

Standard Portuguese, but because it was their first contact with an imposed form of culture, that tried to create a new idea of 'being Brazilian' as well. Many were exposed to embarrassing situations because of their accents and their difficulty in 'correcting' their pronunciation.

In the attempt to build the 'Brazilian nation', there were many repetitive announcements of the need to expand public schools so as to, thereby, attend a greater number of children, teaching them Portuguese and 'love of the country'. What was evident was the intention of the Brazilian state: that there should be a subtractive education (employing the term as defined by Edwards, [10]), and that the Portuguese language should prevail.

### **Final thoughts - the life stories, the silencing and the teaching of Portuguese**

The role of the school in the process of abandoning the Italian dialect by members of the community is undeniable. The testimonies are clear: when they were pupils, women remember that the teacher scolded anyone who spoke Italian. When they were teachers they admit that they used Italian to teach Portuguese. But it did not occur to them to go against the order, revolting against the imposition. Italian speech is circumstantial, it hopes to pass unnoticed. It does not affront or confront the order from above.

Traces of accent are unwanted and thoroughly discredited. And not only as regards pronunciation: peculiar morphosyntactic constructions, Italian lexical items used as borrowed terms, situations of code-switching, everything seemed to contribute to the contempt for a culture. The prohibition to speak Italian, on the other hand, caused by a situation of war, with the threat of imprisonment and humiliation, left deep marks in the mind of the people, who, to this day, in many instances, consider it better not to pass the Italian dialect on to their children.

We can also reflect on the preparation of the teachers. Great is the individual merit of the people who contributed, with their effort, to the development of literacy and basic education in remote areas, whose residents would have no opportunity whatsoever of learning to read, if not for the hard work and dedication of these lay teachers, who used all possible resources, and all their spare time and all their good will to compensate for their own lack of preparation.

This excessive number of tasks prevented them, perhaps, from reflecting on their own practice, and especially on the preemptory order that directed it. If there was a norm to prohibit a natural way of expressing oneself, it was necessary to carry out this order, without questioning it, without analyzing it, without discussing it. It was necessary to obey it, sacrificing an entire way of being and communicating that was not seen as legitimate, but as wrong. In everyday life, however, from the stories people experienced, we realize that not everyone automatically did what had been ordered. We have examples showing that teachers questioned, made adaptations, were sensitive to the problems of their reality. And they taught Portuguese explaining it in Italian whenever the pupils did not understand.

The cultural heritage was not completely lost. The valuing of family and work, the cuisine and other characteristics attest to the presence of an Italic root in the "Serra Gaucha". And there are popular groups of singers that preserve songs that were brought from Italy. The language, however, is increasingly forgotten.

6 Juliana Lamb was born on June 15, 1910 in Caxias do Sul, the daughter of Richard Lamb and Filomena Pieruccini.

7 The teacher Estra Boff Tessari was born on March 22, 2013 in Caxias do Sul, and was a municipal and state teacher from 1929 to 1958.

Today, we find that teachers of Portuguese have only recently, in their training, come up against the possibility of Portuguese being only one of the languages of the community.

Only after the compulsory teaching of linguistics in universities and modern language courses, since the mid-twentieth century, was it that studies on bilingualism, on variation, on the coexistence of the standard language with non-standard varieties, on the close relationship between languages and cultures began to be prioritized.

Ignoring other languages, or condemning them, as was the case with the Vargas government, brought a deeply regrettable consequence: many languages were lost. In many immigration zones today there are only monolingual speakers of Portuguese. A rich linguistic heritage was dismantled. Scorning languages or accents, an attitude we can still see today, has the same result: the speakers end up not passing on the disdained language to their children, or the latter are not interested in acquiring it. Could it be that a ban on speaking the languages of immigration caused the abandonment of the Italian dialect? It certainly contributed to this, along with many other factors that favored the use of the Portuguese language. One indisputable fact is that young urban generations do not speak it any more. And young people in rural areas, though clearly keeping their traces of accent – the same ones that are negatively evaluated by others – do not always speak the Italian dialect, preferring Portuguese. Based on this, Frosi [19] identifies a process of extinction. There are also other reasons, such as the prestige of the official, predominant language, education in Portuguese, the association of the latter with urban culture; all this contributes to new generations preferring Portuguese to the Venetian dialect of Rio Grande do Sul, or *Talian*.

We insist, however, that it is because it marks the entry into new culture(s) that the preference for the Portuguese language is so marked. It stands for the new, the urban, the possibility of an innovative imaginary. It enables integration into new identity processes. *Talian*, on the other hand, points to the past, to the rural environment and to the poverty of their origin. Perhaps more than the decisions of an arbitrary government, the construction of a new Self and a desire for cultural integration appear to have been decisive for the expansion of the Portuguese language and the gradual abandonment of the languages of origin.

## Interviews

CARPEGGIANI, Serafina Rigon. Interviewed by Liane Beatriz Moretto Ribeiro, on 4/Oct/1989. Born on 10/Fev/1911, in Flores da Cunha. She was the daughter of José Rigon and Rosa Borsoni. She was a teacher. Institute of Historical and Cultural Memory, University of Caxias do Sul.

CARRA, Terezinha Ravello. Interviewed by Corina Michelon Dotti, on 3/Apr/1988, in Antonio Prado. Born in 1936, she was the daughter of Luis and Irma Bogoni Ravello. Institute of Historical and Cultural Memory, University of Caxias do Sul.

GARBIN, Regina Maria. Interviewed by Corina Michelon Dotti at the age of 61. She was the daughter of Antonio and Helena Brusamarello Garbin, born in Antonio

Prado, date unknown. Institute of Historical and Cultural Memory, University of Caxias do Sul.

LAMB, Juliana. Interviewed by Anelise Cavagnolli and Susana Storchi Grigoletto on 14/Oct/1991. FG255. Memory Bank of the João Spadari Adami Municipal Historical Archive.

NOVELLO, Virginia Dall'Alba. Interviewed by Liane Beatriz Moretto Ribeiro, on 27/Aug/1986. Born on 1/Jan/1908, in São Valentim de Ana Rech, Caxias do Sul. Institute of Historical and Cultural Memory, University of Caxias do Sul.

PIAZZA, Aleixo. Interviewed by Liane Beatriz Moretto Ribeiro, in July 1984. Born 3/Jan/1913 in Caxias do Sul. Institute of Historical and Cultural Memory, University of Caxias do Sul.

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• The structure of the Italian school system. Before we begin, you need to know that Italian schools can be: • public : State-funded.  
• private : funded through school fees, namely the sums of money paid by the students. • During those years, boys and girls learn to write and read and they apprehend the first notions of History, Geography, Mathematics, Italian Grammar, Science, Music and Physical Education and, for a few years now, also English and Computer Science while Religion classes are optional. 3) 1st grade secondary or middle school. • Professional Technical High School : in this type of school in addition to common subjects, students can acquire practical-technical skills, suited to the entry into employment, in sectors like: • economy. • tourism. Kelly and Altbach argue that • colonial schools sought to extend foreign domination and economic exploitation of the colony • (2) because colonial education is • directed at absorption into the metropole and not separate and dependent development of the colonized in their own society and culture • (4). Colonial education strips the colonized people away from their indigenous learning structures and draws them toward the structures. • Much of the reasoning that favors such a learning system comes from supremacist ideas of the colonizers. • Growing up in the colonial education system, many colonized children enter a condition of hybridity, in which their identities are created out of multiple cultural forms, practices, beliefs and power dynamics. Primary School Teaching. Entre tonos y matices de memorias: itinerarios de docentes en la enseñanza primaria en Caixas do Sul/RS (1920-1960) Resumen Este texto analiza matices de los itinerarios de formación y de las prácticas educativas vividas en la enseñanza primaria en escuelas de Caxias do Sul/RS a partir de las memorias de docentes que nacieron en las dos. • Memories of schools in jewish agricultural colonies in Rio Grande do Sul: verbal narratives from the archive of Marc Chagall Cultural Institute (1904-1930) Abstract This research is situated in the History of Education field, in its interfaces with discussions concerning the constitution of Archives, Memory and Oral History. • The Italian presence on the African continent has a complex history, ranging Terciane Ângela Luchese. Producing Silencing: Portuguese Teaching/Learning in Rural Schools in the Italian Colonial Region, Brazil. American Journal of Educational Research. 2016; 4(5):412-419. doi: 10.12691/education-4-5-9. Abstract. The teaching of Portuguese in schools in Italian immigration regions in Brazil became compulsory after 1937 as determined by Getúlio Vargas's dictatorial government. This also occurred in the colonial region, in the south of Brazil, although children only spoke Italian dialects in rural areas. After Brazil entered World War II, Italian was prohibited and Portuguese...