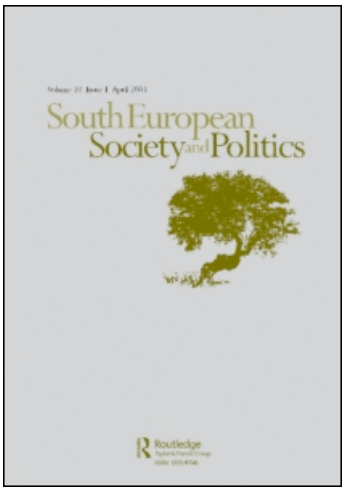

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Beyond Reform: The Orthographic Accord and the Future of the Portuguese Language

José Pedro Zúquete

This article analyses the context, politics and ongoing uproar sparked by the spelling reform of the Portuguese language. It provides a brief history of the reform, and identifies the major themes for and against the orthographic agreement that emerged from the public discussion in Portugal. It discusses the relationship between the Portuguese language and national and transnational identities, as well as the reasons driving the effort to consolidate the geolinguistic and geopolitical space of Lusophonia in globalised times.

Keywords: Portugal; Language; National Identity; Lusophonia; Globalisation

'A language is a place from which the world is seen. ... From my language [we] see the sea. In my language [we] hear its murmur as other [languages] hear the forests or the silence of the desert.' Thus spoke Portuguese novelist Vergílio Ferreira (1998, p. 84), echoing the strong hold that the surrounding ocean and the navigations of the past have on the country's psyche and destiny. No longer an empire but confined to its present European borders, the heritage of Portugal's colonial period nevertheless lives on, particularly through a Romance language that is spoken by more than 200 million people around the world. Portuguese is the official language in eight countries (Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, East Timor, Guinea-Bissau, Portugal, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe) and is also spoken in former overseas territories like India's Goa State or China's Macau.[1] Furthermore, Portuguese creoles may be found from Asia to Africa. While the global spread of a language that originated in a geographically tiny European country is worth noting, the peculiarities do not end there. Portuguese is the only Western language with two official orthographies (European Portuguese and

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Brazilian Portuguese). The longtime push for an orthographic reform that standardises and simplifies spelling, creating one official spelling across the Lusophone world,[2] received a major impulse when in May 2008 the Portuguese parliament ratified a 1990 agreement. Both centre-left and centre-right parties voted in favour, with few abstentions or votes against. The text was subsequently promulgated by the president. However, if there was a generalised consensus, the fact that even the small parliamentary opposition drew voices from across the political spectrum—from right to left and including long-time Socialist Party member, Manuel Alegre—is not without relevance.

In fact, what could look to a detached observer like a simple technical or scientific matter has developed into a full-blown discussion about national, cultural and spiritual identity, as well as about Portugal's own role in the era of globalisation. Although there has been no shortage of voices calling for spelling reform, the reaction against it has been particularly loud, intense and also well organised. 'From my language I see a turbulent sea,' Vergílio Ferreira could have written. Yet before making an incursion into these stormy waters, it is necessary to briefly summarise the history and politics of the reform.

Background

The quest for a standardised Portuguese orthography has lasted for almost one hundred years. In 1911, after the proclamation of the Portuguese Republic, the new regime radically simplified and changed the orthography in a more phonetic direction (though etymological leanings remained), with the goal of promoting literacy and education among the masses. The new orthography became official all over the Portuguese empire. Because Brazil was already an independent nation, however, it did not adopt the changes in spelling conventions. Thus, the orthographic schism in the Portuguese language was 'officially' born.

The decades that followed have been characterised by a continuous divergence of spelling paths across the Atlantic, interrupted by occasional (and often unsuccessful) attempts at convergence. Since 1924, the year that the Brazilian Academy of Letters and the Portuguese Academy of Sciences agreed on the necessity of a common orthography, spelling agreements were reached (in the 1930s, 1940s and 1970s), but never came into force. These efforts intensified in the postcolonial period, and in 1986, now with the full participation of the newly independent African states, a new Orthographic agreement was put onto paper but subsequently dropped due *inter alia* to fierce opposition in Portugal. In 1990, at long last, the 'Orthographic Accord of the Portuguese Language' was signed in Lisbon by all Portuguese-speaking countries, but would become law only when ratified by all signatories. When that process failed, a 1998 amendment extended the ratification process. A further amendment in 2004 allowed the reform to proceed in the countries in which it had already been ratified. In the autumn of 2008, the process had been fully completed only in Brazil, Cape-Verde, Portugal and São Tomé and Príncipe.

The reform aims at directing spelling in a more phonetic direction, particularly by removing silent consonants (c, p, h). For instance, the word *baptismo* (baptism), under the new law, will be written *batismo*. The reform leaves space for flexibility (some words will continue to have dual spelling in Brazilian and European Portuguese), which therefore makes it a partial, not a total, standardisation. Above all, the unification (even if incomplete) of the spelling implies more profound changes in European Portuguese (around 1.5 per cent of words will suffer changes, though this number is contested) than in the Brazilian version (around 0.5 per cent). This factor alone has led to sensationalist press headlines, especially in the European media, epitomised by Italy's *Corriere Della Sera* announcement to its readers that 'Portugal will speak "Brazilian"'.[3]

Exaggerations aside, the perception that the reform was a sell out to the bigger, more powerful former colony fuelled much of the tone and content of the debate in Portugal. In actual fact, African countries will play an important role in the diffusion of the language. According to UN estimates, by 2050 Portuguese-speaking African countries will have a total population of 90 million (UNFPA 2008, pp. 90–91). However, the debate has mostly been framed as an essentially Brazilian-Portuguese issue. It is almost assumed that Africa will inevitably play the role of 'follower' to either Brazil or Portugal, without establishing a more independent path. Overall, in the last two decades, it has been difficult to find a linguist, public intellectual or writer who has not commented on the virtues or evils of the orthographic reform. This state of affairs is not likely to change in the near future.

The Debate

The contentiousness of the reform process is best exemplified by the rise and consolidation of two distinct groups: *acordistas* (pro-agreement) and *desacordistas* (anti-agreement). The *acordistas* camp puts forth practical-pragmatic reasons for the reform. Unifying the orthography (they say) will facilitate and increase the flow of commerce and exchange of culture within Portuguese-speaking countries. Furthermore, it is promoted as an *inevitable* measure to strengthen and boost the Portuguese language in the international arena. In order for Portuguese to compete globally in the context of an English-driven globalization—especially given such new communications technologies as the Internet—it needs to promote a more homogenous face in the form of a simpler, unified language.

The argument regarding the inevitability of this process is stretched further by the reform proponents' claim not only that the role of Brazil as an emerging great power is almost a 'last best hope' for the globalisation of the language, but also that Portugal must, realistically, accept Brazil's unique potential to lead this process. Carlos Reis (2008b), a university professor and a major pro-agreement voice, wonders: 'How can some Portuguese persist in seeing Brazil as a minor partner in this process, even as an enemy?' Or, as stated by another supporter of the reform: 'A minimum of lucidity would be required to understand that it is precisely the Orthographic Accord that will

allow the existence of a "Portuguese language" in Brazil, etc., [and that] without the [Accord] the [Portuguese language] will become, in short time, the "Brazilian Language"' (Santos Neves 2008b). Should Portuguese in Europe and Brazil (and with such other emerging regional powers as Angola) join forces in standardising their language, European Portuguese would avoid the fate of irrelevance, of becoming a minor language used by a dwindling group at the periphery of Europe. An editorial in *Expresso*, the most important weekly newspaper in Portugal, has made this point vividly: 'If Portugal does not advance toward an agreement with Brazil ... soon the Portuguese [spoken in] Portugal will be no more than an oddity spoken by only 10 million people.'[4] The rallying cry 'Adjust or whither away!' reflects both the inexorability of change and the sense of urgency that characterises the pro-agreement position.

The *desacordistas* have launched a campaign that interweaves multiple reasons for rejecting the orthographic reform. Many arguments have already been made, particularly during the (ultimately unsuccessful) push for spelling changes in the 1980s. A 'Movement Against the Orthographic Accord' was created at the time, 'with patriotic fervor and zeal for the written expression of the Portuguese language' (Various 1988, p. 7), by several influential figures within Portugal's cultural and social life. The words of one such opponent back then, that the agreement was 'a true linguistic *coup d'état*: we wake up one morning and—without previous debate, without no one knowing anything—we are faced with a revolution in the orthographic system of the language' (Various 1988, p. 49), could certainly be stated by many of today's opponents.

In fact, a common accusation is that the reform is nothing but a top-down governmental imposition and that the entire process lacked a genuine public debate and participation of all living forces of Portuguese culture. All changes to the language must come from a gradual, and natural, transformation. Because all those who speak the language are the ones who 'own it' (see, e.g., Seixo 2008), the state lacks cultural and moral legitimacy to legislate it. Often quoted is poet Fernando Pessoa's (1997, p. 90) view that 'orthography is a phenomenon of culture and, therefore a spiritual phenomenon. The state has nothing to do with the spirit.'

One of the main criticisms rests on the practical bearings of the reform. Opponents denounce its 'inherent' futility. The reform does not consecrate one unique and exclusive way of writing Portuguese. From a purely linguistic standpoint, the spelling reform is accused of being riddled with countless discrepancies and ambiguities that will in practice have a widespread, chaotic effect on those learning to speak it, as well as on those teaching it. At the same time, the diversities between the two versions of the language are so large that spending vast economic and logistic resources on such a partial enterprise is nonsensical. The financial costs dramatically outweigh the so-called 'benefits': millions of school books and dictionaries will be made useless while Portuguese publishers' exports to the rest of the Lusophone world will decline dramatically, unable to compete with the far larger and powerful Brazilian book

market. (This is the opposite of the argument by the pro-agreement camp that the reform will actually help the publishing business in Portugal.)

Another major source of aversion to the reform stems from the deeply rooted perception that the reform constitutes an outrageous act of submission—not only linguistic but also cultural, economic and geopolitical submission—to Brazil. This fear, which loomed large in the 1980s, is expressed in myriad ways. One expression of this fear is that with the reform, Africa will be 'lost' once again—this time to Brazil. The Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP in its Portuguese acronym) have always used European Portuguese and maintained a strong cultural relationship with their former coloniser. These countries will be 'invaded' by the products of Brazil's huge cultural industry, overwhelming Portugal's influence. There will be no more barriers to Brazil's market strategies, and Portugal will eventually lose its role as a privileged mediator between the PALOP and the rest of the world (Various 1988, pp. 172–174).

Thus, writer and prominent Social Democratic Party member, Vasco Graça Moura, rejecting what he calls a 'sociocultural Darwinist,' 'rule or be ruled' logic (Graça Moura 2007), declared that the reform 'serves geopolitical and business Brazilian interests, to the detriment of the inalienable interests of all the other speakers of Portuguese in the world, especially in our country' (Graça Moura 2008a). Portugal, and its language, is thus a pawn in a wider economic and geopolitical expansionist strategy of a rising Brazil to whose will, if it is the stronger of the nations, Portugal must submit.

Writing about this 'offensive' against the Portuguese, historian Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, wrote in the 1980s that: 'We will not resign ourselves to give up the essence of the legacy that we carry, in order to satisfy the interests of the market ... or ambitions of domination.' Against those who 'think this homeland is small and assume that it would grow dissolved in external hands,' he vowed to 'reject capitulations' and to 'trust our own sensible and tenacious will to reconstruct' Portugal (Various 1988, p. 111). These words epitomise another mainstay of the anti-agreement position: Any change to the language is not a superficial issue, a mere technicality or aesthetic adjustment, but goes beyond that by touching upon deeper issues of national identity. Understandably, the most strident nationalist voices have campaigned against the reform. Portugal's nationalist party sees it as 'one more act of treason', as part of a wider process of national destruction: 'They want to mutilate our mother tongue, which is the last symbol of national sovereignty that we have left.'[5]

However, the vast majority of anti-accord mainstream voices—right or left—hold the belief that because language is in a dynamic relationship with the history, memory and cultural creations of a country, any perceived 'attack' against it, in the words of a philologist against the reform, 'corrupts in the long run the patrimony of a people', and does so 'irreversibly, because the evolution of a language has no return' (Pires 2008). Through the centuries, passing from generation to generation, the language contains the key to the spiritual essence of the nation, and is bound with and inextricable from the country's originality and authenticity. To change the orthography is, in the words of another opponent, 'to provoke random disturbances in the most sensitive and original way that [we have] to establish our personality as a people' (Various 1988, p. 199).

Thus, the reaction against the reform ought to be understood in the light of identity politics. Words like 'identity,' 'integrity' and 'character' abound in anti-reform narratives. It is not by chance that the state of mind and many arguments put forth by *desacordistas* parallel discourses in favour of preserving endangered native languages. A profound sense of loss pervades the discourse. It is as if the native speakers of European Portuguese (wherever they are geographically) are in danger of cultural assimilation by a more dominant culture, and of losing its cultural character as a consequence. The reform has been labeled an 'incurable cancer' (Graça Moura 2008b), whose dire effects, in the long run, will be felt on the impoverished cultural habitat of the community as a whole.

At the same time, this 'defence' of European Portuguese is linked with the imperative of preserving diversity against cultural and linguistic homogenisation. Instead of accepting variation within the language, of accepting and promoting its differences rather than melting them together, the reform strives for a 'utopian "unique" language' (Pacheco 2008). Contrary to what pro-reform voices say, the best policy for the language in times of globalisation is to celebrate and promote diversity, not to curse it, in a technocratic fashion, as a major factor in the language's putative weakness and lack of competitiveness in the world.

The *desacordistas* camp undertook a vigorous campaign to protest and demand an end to the process of reform of the Portuguese orthography. This activism and passionate 'defence of the Portuguese Language' was visible in the media, and particularly vigorous on the Internet. They created an official blog and in May 2008 launched an online petition (subsequently presented to the President of the Republic) under the motto 'as long as there is a language, there is hope'. This manifesto against the agreement starts by bemoaning the present 'degradation' of the Portuguese language that 'wounds irreversibly our multisecular identity and the rich historical and civilisational legacy that we have received and that we have the duty to pass to future generations'. It deems the orthographic accord a danger to 'the essence of the language and to our cultural model'.[6] The petition to redress the 'ill-conceived' reform collected more than 100,000 signatures, including those of influential figures of Portugal's cultural life like writer António Lobo Antunes, philosopher Eduardo Lourenço, architect Siza Vieira and painter Júlio Pomar.

The need and urgency for concerted action to avert disaster, including civil disobedience, is well exemplified in the following words of Graça Moura:

> In face of all this scandal, civic society cannot be a bystander. It must insist in its protest … it must sign in a massive way the petition/manifesto on the Internet. It must text message everywhere, saying that the Orthographic Accord is a national embarrassment. It must force the revision of such an outrage. It must declare on all occasions that it does not accept it and that it refuses to comply with it. (Graça Moura 2008b)

Conversely, there was also a rather less successful manifesto in favour of a faster adoption of the agreement. (The transition period is expected to last six years in Portugal.)[7]

Overall, the debate has been heated—in the print and electronic media, especially on the blogosphere—and occasionally harsh rhetoric has been used. Pro-agreement supporters have accused their opponents of being reactionary, of holding 'obsolete' nationalist attachments and even feeling nostalgia for the 'good old times' of Salazar. The anti-agreement group has returned the favour by noting that imposition by decree of the changes and lack of genuine discussion are more characteristic of dictatorial than democratic practice (see, e.g., Santos Neves 2008b; Seixo 2008).

Universalism Revisited

Relentless in his denunciation of the evils of spelling reform, Graça Moura (2008a) once lamented that while for Brazil all the process from the outset obeyed market strategies, 'naïve' Portugal was the only nation that, always more 'inclined to metaphysics', saw such reform as a way of maintaining the 'unity' of the language. While philosophical inclinations exist and inform much of the dynamics, the naivety dimension is overstated. There is a geopolitical logic and purpose underlying the movement toward reform.

The approval of the orthographic reform is widely seen as a required step toward implementing a much larger cultural and political strategy in the world. While the accord was still being discussed in parliament, a government-commissioned study publicised the view that 'the Portuguese language constitutes a tool of strategic assertion that transcends a restricted linguistic dimension'. Furthermore, the study expressed the need to overcome the gap between the number of speakers of the language and its diminished international dimension. According to Carlos Reis (2008c), one of the authors of the project, Portuguese should be 'incomparably more important than French, German, or Italian'. When Portuguese-speaking countries prevail over their development problems, the status of the language will change, for 'the power of the language only asserts itself when the language is a language of power'. The President of the Camões Institute, the institution in charge of promoting Portuguese language and culture abroad, strikes a similar tone: 'The language can be a tool of power. The countries with the most spoken language have more power, in business, as well as in culture' (Luz Afonso 2008). Portuguese, for example, is not even an official language of the United Nations. The time has come to give to the language the justified respect, reputation and power it deserves.

Obviously, the success of such an enterprise of worldwide consolidation and expansion of Portuguese depends on the collective will, action and purpose of *all* countries involved. Thus the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP, in its Portuguese acronym) is viewed as a major factor for the success of such a mission. The CPLP was founded in 1996 by all Portuguese speaking countries (except East Timor, which later joined as an independent state in 2002) as a 'new political project based on the Portuguese language as a historical link and common patrimony'. After a somewhat timid start, the CPLP has been increasingly seen by the countries involved as a potentially crucial force in a world order of multiple powers.

This development was visible during the seventh CPLP heads of state summit in July 2008 in Lisbon. The summit was organised under the motto 'Portuguese Language: A Common Heritage, a Global Future'. Its aims included delineating a common strategy of promotion of the language on a global scale. In a declaration praising the Orthographic Accord, member states claimed that, in a time of widespread 'challenges offered by globalisation', Portuguese has a unique role because it belongs to 'multiple geopolitical matrixes', thus making the ultimate goal of 'projecting the Portuguese language as a *global language*' necessary not only for CPLP but also for other peoples. The organisation approved many resolutions to strengthen the language, including the need both to make Portuguese an official or working language in international bodies and to increase the number of translators as well as CPLP certified teachers of Portuguese as a foreign language. It also committed itself to the revitalisation of the Portuguese Language International Institute (IILP, in its Portuguese acronym)—a CPLP institute that has languished due to lack of funds since its creation.

The Portuguese language is ultimately viewed as a 'common good [that] plays an important economic, social and cultural role in the globalisation that manifests itself in the XXI century' (CPLP 2008). At the same time, the Council of Ministers of Portugal, committed to boosting 'the image of Portugal in the world', approved a strategy of 'recognition and promotion of the language' that, among other things, creates by decree a Language Fund (with initial funding of €30 million) to help support language-oriented programmes (Conselho de Ministros 2008).

Though the spelling reform is controversial, the overall aim of elevating Portuguese to higher international heights enjoys broad consensus at an institutional and party-system level. It is strongly supported by President Aníbal Cavaco Silva, who has often mentioned the need to reinforce the 'strategic global advantage' of Portuguese.[8] Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) of different political leanings have worked to pass an effective internationalisation of Portuguese through Brussels. The recognition by the European Union that 'European world languages' play an important role both as 'valuable communication tools for business' and as 'links between peoples and nations of different regions in the world', is seen by many MEPs as a crucial step in the right direction. It is believed to provide an opening to the strengthening of the weight that Portuguese carries across the EU as no longer a 'small' language spoken in the periphery of the continent but rather a language *at the centre* of global communication (see, e.g., Ribeiro e Castro 2008; European Commission 2008).

Regardless of occasional discouraging signs,[9] there has been growing interest by the government and the CPLP in the economic capital of the Portuguese language in the global market. The Camões Institute and the government through the Ibero-American Conference have funded and commissioned studies to assess the 'user value' of belonging to the Portuguese Linguistic group. This renewed interest in the potential of the language aims at creating a geolinguistic, cultural and, to an increasing degree, political space: a Lusophone bloc. The idea that the 'hour of Lusophonia' is now at hand recurs in many narratives supporting the protection and expansion of the Portuguese language. The concept of Lusophonia is not understood in the narrow

sense of 'Portuguese-speaking'. Fuelled by history, memory and imagination, it rather encapsulates a wider cultural and political view of society and the world. It transcends the limits of a linguistic community by becoming, in the minds of those who adhere to this belief, a pluralistic and humane worldview.

This Lusophone imagination carries a great weight in today's promotion of the language. This can be seen in many practical ways. There is the general wish to create a CPLP citizenship to facilitate the integration of citizens in other member states as well as the circulation of peoples. As stated by Portuguese Prime Minister José Sócrates: 'Citizenship has a central place in Portugal's Presidency [of the CPLP, from 2008–2010]. Our sense of belonging to the [CPLP] community is based on it. That is why we will propose the recognition of rights of citizenship' (RTP 2008). The idea to formally create a 'Statute of the Lusophone Citizen' across CPLP countries is viewed as a crucial step toward giving a political form to the transnational community of Portuguese speakers.

There is an unmistakably normative dimension to the citizenship project. Portugal's Minister of Culture, in times that he sees as 'dramatic and uncertain', made an appeal to all Lusophone countries: 'Let's make more than two hundred million great, educated patriots, and spread around the world a plural and xenophile model, [a model of] integration through the language and culture, tolerant and welcoming' (Lusa 2008). The political dimension of this project also implies a unified diplomatic voice in the international arena. In the context of boosting the weight of Lusophonia in the world, one of the major CPLP diplomatic goals is to make Brazil a permanent UN Security Council member. It is believed that the rise of Lusophonia in the world will be proportional to the weight and prestige acquired in the world by the most powerful Lusophone country.

The belief that Lusophonia has the potential to be a power centre in a multipolar international system exerts a powerful hold on the minds of many proponents of closer ties between Portuguese-speaking countries. 'The Orthographic agreement [must be seen], in its essence, as a political and geo-strategic issue,' stated a supporter of the idea. 'This "Global Hour" cannot but also be the "Lusophone Hour" that could even provide an excellent example of a successful globalisation' (Santos Neves 2008a).

Thus, the Lusophone bloc would carve its own path in the twenty-first century as an alternative model of globalisation. Carlos Reis (2008a) describes the 'destiny' of the Portuguese language: 'In a world that we repeatedly recognise as globalised, the consolidation of great geo-cultural blocs may help to safeguard singularities and diversities, even inside those blocs, in domains that go beyond the language ... in literature, in non-verbal cultural practices, in business, in diplomacy, in international organisations, in science, etc.' The mobilising concept of Lusophonia, despite internal differences, consecrates the inherent wholeness of Portuguese speaking countries—it finds unity in diversity.

The deeply held belief that Portugal, owing to its historical trajectory, is a universalistic nation propels the forward-looking Lusophone project.[10] This creation will put an end to the country's current geographical and statistical smallness in the world. Through Lusophonia, Portugal will step from a lacklustre present into, once again, an epic future. Rather than a consequence of an aggressive nationalism, this

vision, in its essence, entails a re-definition of national identity: Swept to the background of Europe, Portugal finds that in a time of globalisation, national interest is best served by incorporation into a larger, transnational, transcontinental (but still culturally, spiritually and authentically Portuguese), global project.

This mindset resonates with a significant sector of the political and cultural elites. It has also fuelled civic society activism—for instance, in the form of an International Lusophone Movement. Inspired by writers of the past (e.g., Jesuit priest António Vieira, poet Fernando Pessoa or philosopher Agostinho da Silva), this movement has as a founding premise the alleged universalism of Portugal—a nation that, throughout its history, has showed a unique ability (or calling) to bring different peoples, cultures and civilisations together. A Lusophone Union (as a new brand name for the CPLP) based on superior humanistic, spiritual and ethic values (as opposed to the exclusive materialistic ethos of the current globalisation) may provide a viable alternative path to a world in crisis and threatened by economic, environmental, religious and ethnic disruption.[11]

The overall project of Lusophonia as a recreation of the homeland is looked upon less favourably by other voices. Historian Rui Ramos (2008) sees it as a vacuous demonstration of delusions of grandeur stemming from recurrent dreams (or nightmares) about the loss of the empire: 'When the subject in question is the [Portuguese] language, this happens: All of a sudden, this lazy and decadent country becomes a belligerent power, proud of its acquisitions and aiming at new conquests ... and therefore we continue in our pursuit of our overseas empire, even if no one notices.' Delusional or not, it is difficult fully to capture the Portuguese debate about the future of the language without taking a closer look at these spellbound visions of a Lusophonic future.

Conclusion

As the title of this article indicates, the issues at the core of the national discussion on the proposed changes to Portuguese orthography transcend a simple reform. In a perfect world, the following words of the linguist David Crystal could well help settle the orthographic issue, to the satisfaction of *acordistas*, at least from a theoretical standpoint: 'We need to accept change in language as a normal process. This means we should stop seeing it as decay and deterioration. ... Language change is inevitable, continuous, universal and multidirectional. Languages do not get better or worse when they change. They just change' (Crystal 2004, p. 130). Yet because it is not a perfect world, *desacordistas* will always argue that, though recognising that languages are continuously shaped by those who speak them, as computer-mediated and cell phone-mediated forms of communication demonstrate, languages *do* get worse. Not all changes are welcome, especially if the changes are 'artificially' imposed.

The debate will also rage on beyond purely linguistic matters. Each side sees itself as the *true* defender of the language, as providing the best answer to the challenge of globalisation. By seeking to unify the Portuguese language with other variants, one camp takes an 'unavoidable' step toward a unified strategy of combat on behalf of Lusophonia.

The other camp, deploring standardisation as wholly unnecessary for the future of Portuguese in the world, sees the diversity rather than the homogenisation of the language as the best testament to the richness of Lusophonia. From a geopolitical standpoint, both sides frame the issue of reform in terms of surrendering the leadership of Lusophonia to Brazil—unavoidably in one view, unacceptably for the other. The entire discussion raises valid research questions both about the viability of a Lusophone bloc and about the potential for the strengthening of other vast geolinguistic spaces, as centres of power in a world of multiple powers, in the twenty-first century.

Ultimately, as we have seen, the debate over spelling reform has had the consequence of throwing light on the ties that bind the global reach of Portuguese and a sense of fulfillment of a national and historical destiny through the exaltation of Lusophonia. Pessoa (1992, pp. 232–233) once famously said: 'My homeland is my language.' It seems that for many, the construction of such a homeland is only just beginning.

Notes

[1] Regarding all the countries where Portuguese is the official language, Brazil has the largest number of speakers with 194 million people; Angola has a total population of 17.5; Mozambique 21.8; Portugal 10.7; Guinea-Bissau 1.7; East Timor 1.1; and Cape Verde and São Tomé e Príncipe have approximately 500,000 and 150,000, respectively (see UNFPA 2008).

[2] 'Lusophone' is a term derived from 'Lusitania', a former Roman province located where modern Portugal is now situated. The province took its name from an Indo-European pre-Roman tribe: the Lusitanos.

[3] See 'In Portogallo si parlerà "brasiliano"', *Corriere Della Sera*, 18 May.

[4] See 'Viva o acordo ortográfico', *Expresso*, 1 December.

[5] See *Terra Portuguesa*, no. 1, April–June 2008, p. 5.

[6] The blog is available online at: http://emdefesadalinguaportuguesa.blogspot.com/.

[7] The blog is available online at: http://www.gopetition.com/online/17740.html/.

[8] Cavaco Silva (2008) sees as one of the crucial measures to strengthen the 'universal value of Lusophonia' the recognition of Portuguese as an official or even working language in international institutions.

[9] For instance, a 2007 EU-Commissioned Study, 'Effects on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise', focused on the growing need for other languages, including 'Russian and German (for eastern Europe), French (Africa) and Spanish (Latin America),' with no mention of Portuguese. The study is available online at: http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleaseAction.do?reference=MEMO/07/79&format=HTML&aged=O&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr.

[10] On this connection between universalism and Portugal's national identity see, e.g., the work of the anthropologist Jorge Dias (1985 [1955]).

[11] See, e.g., the manifesto of the magazine Nova Águia (2008). The International Lusophone Movement website is available online at: http://movimentolusofono.wordpress.com/.

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