

Portuguese language identity in the world: adventures and misadventures of an international language

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Abstract

This paper offers several cases where language plays an undeniable role in identity and world citizenship, concerning Portuguese-speaking countries. First, I provide some quantitative data on Portuguese as a global language, and highlight some of the challenges it faces now, being the official language in a dozen different countries with different governments and policies. Second, I offer my view of the importance of the language to the Portuguese identity, using two children books written 100 years ago, to explain how identity is represented and conveyed to the young generations. After briefly mentioning three schools in Portugal concerned with national identity (the mythical, the sociological, and the historical), I propose a “linguistic” school, going on to attempt to substantiate my claims on the importance of the language for lusophone identity in widely different cases: the linguistic situation in Mozambique, the East Timor crisis and its impact in Portugal, the (international) orthographic agreement, Brazilian linguistic activity and language policy in the digital world. I end the paper suggesting that, since language both unites and divides us, corpus linguistic studies could and should provide interesting empirical data for the quest (and recreation) of our international identity, and make a plea for the active involvement of the linguistic community in the development of PI (International Portuguese).

1. Introduction

The relationship of most Portuguese-speaking people with their language can be described this way: their country may be in crisis, things may be far from perfect, but our language is beautiful, transcends us, and we are attached to it no matter political differences or actual border conflicts. Fernando Pessoa’s remark “my homeland is the Portuguese language” is frequently (over)used – and possibly misused (Lourenço, 1999) – to convey this attitude. In this paper, I will argue for this brotherhood in language (and consequently cultures) as part and parcel of our identities, reappearing at different times in history and in different issues in the lusophone (i.e., Portuguese-speaking) world: the view of Camões as multinational inspirer, children’s literature in times of crisis, the Timor invasion and how Portuguese reacted to it, etc.

This text evolved from a contribution to a Language-Nation-Identity workshop held in Oslo on the occasion of the celebration of 150 years of the Italian nation (and national language), as a contribute to clarification (but also problematization) of the many issues related to, or that can be brought to bear on, the complex issue of identity, national identity and the role of language. Since the workshop joined a number of scholars with very different language (and therefore cultural) backgrounds, I thought it appropriate to provide a short history of the Portuguese language and its role in shaping the modern world, both culturally and linguistically. In this respect, I touched upon two aspects which seem particularly relevant in an international context, namely a) The relative homogeneity of Portuguese compared to other national languages with very differentiated dialects, and the several explanations offered for this; b) The early use of Portuguese as *lingua franca*, linked to the importance that language itself has had in the political acts throughout history. This was removed from the present paper, but can still be inspected in Santos (2014).

I also brought to the fore an analysis of two children's books published in 1907, which I considered highly relevant not only as an example of national identity building in a time of crisis, but also because the first one is a colourful introduction to the reunification of Italy (which was the trigger for the present paper in the first place).

This literary text – two volumes for children written 100 years ago, *Céu Aberto* and *Em Pleno Azul* by Virgínia de Castro e Almeida – beautifully illustrates the use of literature in Portuguese as a strong pillar of national identity, in Portugal, in a moment of crisis and imminent political change (republicanism would replace monarchy in three years' time). They are especially relevant to the current context of discussing national identities around the Italian case, since the setting of the first book is a trip in Italy and the recent political events of unification are described in a very positive light. The second book takes place in Switzerland, presented as a model of modern political and economical ways.

This paper is structured as follows: The minimum bare facts on Portuguese as language are laid upon in section 2, followed by a cursory description, based on official sources, of the current situation of Portuguese in the world. In section 3, I present the literary text so that readers without knowledge of Portuguese can get a concrete idea of some pieces of cultural identity. In section 4, I attempt to briefly introduce the huge area on national identity in Portugal, mainly to give the reader pointers to the many experts. Section 5 presents my own analysis of a) the linguistic situation in Mozambique, b) the question of Timor and its identity, c) the current orthographical agreement just signed by all

countries where Portuguese is official language, d) the digital era and its consequences for Portuguese, and e) the role of Portuguese in Brazilian national consciousness.

I end the paper proposing a program on corpus-based research on identity in the lusophone world, given current technological possibilities.

2. Some consequences of History for language (history)

There is no place here for a brief history of the Portuguese language, but the interested readers are suggested to look at my own publicly available five pages text, and especially the references within (Santos, 2014).

In a nutshell, Portuguese is a remarkably homogeneous language and it has a long history of both dissemination (and study).

As a country and as a people, it always tended to consensus and compromise, and through that attitude it also developed a strong and identity-forming language. The Portuguese diaspora is undeniably important and contributed to the language (consciousness) and national consciousness of all involved. By being forced – a or choosing – to emigrate, and by returning, Portuguese “movers” have contributed to renewal and tradition alike.¹ This constant migration and return has contributed to Portuguese history in many ways. Also, the presence of the sea (and of boats) from times immemorial contributed to two contrary ingredients of Portuguese identity: on the one hand, to solitude, to a feeling of one's own limits and belonging to the land; on the other hand, to a sense of adventure and of meeting the other by sailing into the sea.

The history of Portuguese is original also because its gravity center moved to another region with the consent (or through the actions) of the Portuguese themselves. While one could say that the same happened to English, the way it occurred was radically different: it was not by British choice that USA became independent and later on more powerful. Likewise, as far as Spanish is concerned, the fragmentation of hispanophone America after bloody wars against Spain did not allow for one major competitor of Spain. In any case, this power dislocation did not occur without problems, and in fact one can observe little regard for a global (international) language policy in Brazil (according to Gago, p.c., the Portuguese government preoccupation with language was never reciprocated by the Brazilian authorities, despite several attempts from Portugal). Likewise, see e.g. Lourenço (1999), there is a strong cultural fashion among Brazilian linguists and writers from the 70s on to minimize the (huge) Portuguese cultural influence on the way Brazil is, stressing

¹I use the unusual term “movers” instead of migrants or travellers inspired by Russell-Wood (1992), because all sorts of movement have been involved.

American Indian and African roots instead. While these positions are no doubt based on well-meant research, it strikes me that their conception of a white European Portugal is even further fetched from reality than the mythical national romantic Indians of e.g. José de Alencar, whose novels play in Brazil a similar role to Fenimore Cooper's in North America.

Why do I call this a myth? Because African influence in Portugal is not to despise, either (see e.g. Henriques (2009) and Zonta (2009)), not only because of the slave presence: the mobility (to go overseas and back) of Portuguese and Brazilians plays an important role in Portuguese history as well. Forty years ago, descolonization in 1974-76 brought a million African people to mainland Portugal – people who lived in Africa and decided to choose Portuguese citizenship and not Mozambican, or Angolan, for example. The influence of their language in current Portuguese spoken in Portugal has, as far as I know, still to be studied, but certainly cannot be discarded: it is yet another sign of the importance of migration and movement in the lusophone world.

So, the myth of Portugal as a small white European country just like before the 1400s, replacing a truly global civilization, is a huge mistake that only diminishes both countries and their common past.

In any case, it is important to note that, even though this whitening and minimizing of Portugal can be considered a “teenage” disease of a big and young country like Brazil,² that will tend to disappear when Brazilians understand their important role in modern world, the influence of the Portuguese literary canon has always been very important in Brazil. Again, I can only provide as an random indicator for this claim the episode of (Portuguese) Eça de Queirós's *Crime do Padre Amaro* scene in one of the most archi-Brazilian books, *Gabriela Cravo e Canela* by Jorge Amado, as strong indirect evidence. Conversely, it is common knowledge that Brazilian authors have always been loved and admired by the Portuguese (elite). More important still, the influence of “Brazilians” (as the Portuguese emigrants to Brazil who returned to Portugal were called) in the Portuguese national consciousness is significant, as the literature of the XIX century proves – see *A Brasileira de Prazins* by Camilo Castelo Branco or *A Morgadinha dos Canaviais* by Júlio Dinis.

2 It is said that, the oldest a country, the more concern and respect they have for history, probably because they have more of it, while youngest countries are more concerned with the now and the future. I don't know if there is any sociological data to corroborate this impression, though.

But back to the present: Now, on the twenty-first century, there are eight countries with Portuguese as official language (and one territory, Macao), joined multinationally under the *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa* (CPLP) since the 90s, see <http://www.cplp.org/>. According to international statistics from 2010,³ there are 240 million native speakers. This means that Portuguese is, for whatever these figures are worth,

- the third most spoken European language in the world,
- the sixth language in the world in terms of native speakers,
- the most spoken language in the Southern hemisphere⁴

Also in terms of Internet presence, it has a solid weight, according to the published numbers.⁵ It is also the only language, as far as I know, which has a museum devoted to it. Located in São Paulo, Brazil, opened in March 2006: <http://www.museudalinguaportuguesa.org.br/>; and the only language which has had a dedicated project/portal/network for its computational processing for the last fifteen years, <http://www.linguateca.pt/>.

Portuguese is also included in long-standing projects and networks concerning the Romance languages, such as *União Latina*, and several ibero-american organizations and communities, but in these it tends to play a minor role, compared respectively to French or Spanish. There are, of course, different ways to measure the cultural weight of a language or nation, including global knowledge of major actors, major historical facts, Nobel prizes obtained, and number of translations from and into other languages (see Calvet, 2006, 2008). In all these, French stands much higher than Portuguese – but this is easy to understand, since one is observing mainly through the English web or world. A little counter measure tried in 2011-2011 was to raise interest for cultural studies on the Portuguese Wikipedia with *Págico* (Mota et al., 2012).

³Based on UN data of August 2010, <http://observatorio-lp.sapo.pt/pt/dados-estatisticos/falantes-de-portugues-literacia> (accessed 20 October 2013).

⁴From <http://observatorio-lp.sapo.pt/pt/dados-estatisticos/projecao-e-uso/portugues-a-lingua-mais-falada-no-hemisferio-sul/lingua-mais-falada-no-HS> (accessed 20 October 2013).

⁵Portuguese is the 8th language on Wikipedia, and the 15th language in terms of translation into other languages, see <http://observatorio-lp.sapo.pt/pt/geopolitica/o-valor-economico-da-lingua-portuguesa/o-valor-economico-da-LP> (accessed 20 October 2013).

There is also the economic value of a speaker, for a multinational company to decide about supporting its language in products, something that Portuguese speakers all know too well, in the computer science world. Dutchmen and Scandinavians tend to get better product support because in average they are much richer. This has been true in the 90s of IBM, Microsoft, and, in fact, all major computer companies, although there is no open documentation on this.⁶ But even at the time of writing it must be surprising that big NLP projects such as Google N-grams⁷ have not yet considered Portuguese, while smaller languages like Hebrew or Russian are included. Still, given the recent economic boost in Brazil, considered as one of the most promising emergent countries, this may change.

3. Children's literature building up, or rebuilding, national identity

Ever since our (the Portuguese) golden age – which is perfectly represented by Camões in several respects – literature has been an important source of creating and feeding a national identity, supported by two pillars: language and race mixing. The imperial “ideology” in Portugal was, for many years: Those who spoke Portuguese, the language of Camões, were Portuguese. The more races and mixed people Portuguese gave origin to, the more Portuguese we all were.

In addition, note the following saying, known by all Portuguese: *Deus criou o branco e o preto, o português o mulato* (‘God created white and black people, the Portuguese created the mixed ones’). This is something always emphasized – *Portugal deu novos mundos ao mundo* (‘Portugal gave new worlds to the world’) is perhaps the most quoted verse of *Os Lusíadas* – but, in this paper what I would like to stress is, it also gave to the world new people who became Portuguese. Note another extremely cited verse of *Lusíadas*, glorifying the Portuguese diaspora with *alma por todos os cantos repartida* (‘soul divided/shared among all world corners’). Interestingly, one of the most famous scholars who stressed this is the Brazilian sociologist and writer Gilberto Freyre, a key intellectual in the “racial democratization of Brazil”, see Freyre (1933).

6 Obviously, companies do not make public their economic data, but indirectly one can take their refraining of investing in a particular language on economic prospects.

7 <http://storage.googleapis.com/books/ngrams/books/datasetsv2.html> (accessed 17 May 2014).

Contrary to the British empire, where the concept of British citizen was an addition to an ethnic or racial substrate – a Bengali or a Rhodesian did not become English – for a long time Portuguese made and created more Portuguese: in Goa, in Angola, in Brazil. The distinctive trait was: to be a Christian, and to speak Portuguese.⁸ It is enough to travel to Goa, Macao or Brazil to see how similar the colonial architecture was to mainland Portugal. This is not supposed to be a defense (or an attack) of Portuguese imperial policies, just a reminder that it was rather different from other colonial empires better known to my expected audience.⁹

My intention here is to look at a one century-old children's book as representative of children's literature in a time of national crisis, and therefore in need of reinforcing national identity. In the end of the nineteenth century, Portugal lost the right to a large part of Africa to England, Portugal's oldest ally as the mantra taught in Salazar's history classes goes, but never letting this go in the way of making profit – for a political history of the alliances between the two nations and especially regarding their colonies, see Oliveira (2007).

The books in question, *Céu Aberto* and *Em Pleno Azul*,¹⁰ were written by Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, a woman who was a Portuguese cinema pioneer, and who lived abroad, particularly in France, for some time; see Magalhães & Alçada (1990). Her views are clearly modern for her time: she is republican and an admirer of Switzerland, as becomes clear from the plot. She uses the boat trip of three Portuguese children from Lisbon to Italy and their travels from Genoa to Napoli to teach art, science and history in the first book. The second reports their adventures in two Swiss boarding schools (one for boys, one for girls), and she continues teaching various subjects while also suggesting various pedagogically revolutionary forms of school organization.

8 This, for the new ones. Jews that fled to England or the Low Countries continued to be called Portuguese there – because they spoke Portuguese – and were obviously not Christians, they just had to flee from Portugal to escape slaughter or forced conversion.

9 It is probably fitting to acknowledge that one of the most ingrained self-conceptions of Portuguese is that they/we are unique, different, something which has also been critically commented by identity scholars, see e.g. Lourenço's (1996) statement that *É difícil encontrar um povo mais frenético de singularidade que o nosso* ('It is hard to find a more frenetically singular people than ours').

10 *Céu Aberto* means literally "open sky/heaven", but metaphorically "high happiness". *Em pleno azul* means "In full blue", which, contrary to English *blue*, means happy plenitude. Another shade of blue, probably.

One interesting detail in the second book is how she introduces Camões, giving at once the measure of how important he is/was in an international context and automatically increasing the pride of the young readers to “have” such a poet. (I have no idea how realistic the scene could have been at that time – as an adult, I am inclined to believe it as utterly improbable, but as a child I believed it completely, and I suppose the same happened to all my compatriots who read it during the many years those books were available.) The scene is as follows. The boys had just met a new (older) student in the train, Pedro, whom they discover to be Portuguese as well, and he mentions *Os Lusíadas* as his favourite history book – and in a passing remark he refers to Camões's tragic life, which raises the attention of a talkative, extrovert German woman friend, who asks for more. This way the reader gets served a number of facts about Camões's life, together with the high praise of an old man who mysteriously intervenes – and whom we later find out to be not least than the Swiss president himself!

(The story swiftly continues defending a republican regime, and then proceeds to further interesting episodes including the story of Wilhelm Tell, so for a young reader there is nothing special in the particular Camões section, which is read with the same interest as everything that comes before and after. However, some reflection convinces me that it is hard to find a better way to implant the following implicit ideas: “Camões is known by the whole world”, “Camões is the best or one of the best poets that ever existed”, “We Portuguese who have Camões are lucky”... It is in fact interesting to see that, while a variety of Italian painters and sculptors, and German musicians, are mentioned in the two books, no other writers appear at all.

Another interesting detail of this book series is the prominent place given to Brazilians. In the first book, one of the grown-ups who caters for the children's education in Italy is an elderly Brazilian man. In the second book, the older girl whom Rita meets in her boarding school, Constança, is the female counterpart of Pedro, displaying all virtues and qualities of the perfect modern woman (of the time), and she is Brazilian.

Again, this is no accident of the plot, especially given that the three children are presented as polyglots: they speak French and German perfectly (and can communicate flawlessly in Spanish), so they would not need companions of the same language. The message is clear: Brazilians, because they speak Portuguese, are almost like us, or just like us, or, why not spell it out unashamedly as it was meant to be understood, as good and nice and friendly and understandable as us.

Books such as these are important to create and strengthen national identity, by promoting a feeling of shared pride (and knowledge), as well as providing role models for (child) readers. The children in the books have (or get, and then convey) a national conscience above the usual, because they are moving in an international setup. That is, if those kids had not been in international boarding schools or in a multinational context (such as a boat cruise), they would hardly ever talk about Camões or national character, but, being confronted with other stories and nations and role models, they learn to be proud of their own country and history (and the reader with them).

But let's move from the fictional and rose-coloured stories to the work of the experts in history and society.

4. National identity: is there a Portuguese soul?¹¹

Portugal is one of the oldest countries in Europe, and also one which suffered least changes in its European borders and more changes abroad (by this I mean the territorial borders/influence, from the XV to the XX century – it is also the European empire that lasted longer¹²). It is of course endowed with the usual lore of mythical and historical ancestors, and with a long history where it can fetch heroes and/or compensate for lack of current power. It is not possible in the twenty-first century to ignore the many forces and reconstructions and re-creations that, in all times, tried to give the Portuguese, its (many, different depending on the epoch) national character(s). I cite, just to give an idea to outsiders, several Portuguese myths: that Ulysses funded Lisbon, that the Holy Virgin appeared to our first king before a major battle against the Moors, and 800 years later in Fátima to defend the Western world against communism, and, probably the most important of them, that D. Sebastião, the dreamer king, will once come back and give us back our empire.

There is, however, a solid foundation for our Portugueseness in the epic poem of Camões, *Os Lusíadas*. Both the poem's contents, and its author, are the source of many myths or mythical retellings, namely connected to an utmost adventurous life of the poet. Camões is also essentially connected with Portuguese / lusophone identity in that it is commemorated in the same day, the 10th of June, as Portugal and the Portuguese-speaking communities in the world, see CIN (1983).

¹¹ In this section (only), I will only speak about Portugal, partly because of space constraints and because it is the country I know best.

¹² For an enjoyable introduction to Portugal's history aimed at the lay foreigner, see Page (2007).

Interestingly, also a lot of national identity in the popular mind is connected with language: *saudade* is a national word, as well as *fado*, words that the man in the street will proudly present as not having correspondence in other languages.

As could be expected, there is a wide and rich literature about Portuguese national identity, which, following Sobral (2003), I will classify in three kinds: the mythical, the sociological, and the (modern) historical, of which I will simply cite three good representatives for the interested reader: respectively Eduardo Lourenço (1999), Boaventura de Sousa Santos (1994), and Sobral himself, Sobral (2012), together with Mattoso (1988).

Just to give an idea of the first school, Lourenço (1999) describes the (identity-cultural) relations between Brazil and Portugal in terms of a father-son complex that makes Brazilians ignore the Portuguese essence in Brazilian culture, while Portuguese people imagine Brazilians as their continuation, both (he claims) delusional and immature positions. But, as we all know, identity and ingrained myths have to be visited and reappropriated or discarded by every generation, and there are also many interesting books offering new visions of Brazilian/Portuguese history for the layman in Brazil, see e.g. Gomes (2007) or Narloch (2011).

But, and to get back to the main topic of the present paper, language and identity, let me recall Deutsch's (1953) analysis of one nation as a community of communication, which entails that the intensification of a national community is related to economic development processes such as urbanization and schooling – in which a common language is paramount. I obviously subscribe to Deutsch's (1953:188) suggestion that "the essential aspect of the unity of a people (...) is the complementarity or relative efficiency of communication among individuals", so it is not surprising that a linguistic vision can also say something about identity and (inter)nationalism. One could therefore raise a "linguistic school" as a fourth explanatory alley of identity. It is in this direction that I will try to show in what follows that language – in this case, the Portuguese language – is an important key to identity and for the cultural understanding of the lusophone world.

5. Several cases involving the Portuguese language

This section, possibly the most relevant to the issues of language and identity, I will present several different cases that show in practice the importance of language for Portuguese speakers around the world.

5.1 The linguistic situation in Mozambique

Mozambique is an example of a country where the Portuguese language is dramatically increasing, because it is felt and thought by the (middle class) population as the language of culture and power, and the *lingua franca* for communication in the whole country. Faced with the impossibility to choose one African language among the 20 or more existing in the country, the rulers after independence took the administration language as a neutral and practical choice. This is not the whole story, though: It is important to note that most of the revolutionary intelligentsia had been formed in metropolitan Portugal and also the communication with the other African independence movements was done in Portuguese. In fact, most of the new political class had Portuguese as their native tongue, together with the fact that quite a few whites (belonging to a cultural elite) had chosen to stay. So, it is easy to understand that, since the Mozambican revolution was done in Portuguese, so the state after it remained so. All educational infrastructure, albeit little and underdeveloped, was in Portuguese as well, and the Portugal of revolutionary times was a source of help and of people (*cooperantes*) who wanted to help build the new Mozambican country. Also Brazilian help came to the land, for they felt they belonged to the same language community. It is not my role to discuss the correctness of this choice, see Katupha (1986), Firmino (2008) or Reite (2013) for discussion; what I want to mention here is that the population who speaks Portuguese now is much larger than at the time of independence, and that Mozambican linguists are studying both the influence of African (bantu) languages in the Mozambican variety, and the influence of Portuguese in those languages as well (Gonçalves, 1998, Gonçalves & Stroud, 1997-2000, Firmino, 2005, Silva, 2003).

This, in my opinion, reflects the appropriation of a communicative tool, imposed on or taught to peoples with other native languages, for the creation of a new (Mozambican) identity, which naturally contains some of the culture implicitly present in the language, and from which it will evolve. Instead of rejection, it represents a move for co-ownership and co-partnership, which is very probably a result of the fact that a new “language”, or discourse, of the political left, appeared both in Portugal and in the new African countries.

5.2 The East Timor invasion by Indonesia and Portuguese reaction

Another case that shows the relationship of people with their co-speakers in the antipodes, is the recent history of East Timor, invaded by Indonesia after independence from Portugal in 1975 and only finally freed and independent in 2002, see Gunn (1999), Mascarenhas & Silva (2000), and Magalhães (1999, 2007) for the history of this process. One should note

that solidarity with the East Timorese cause was a social phenomenon in Portugal, where there was an (almost) 100% boycott to Indonesian products and where news of any legal and political international moves regarding this issue were TV-news openers. Also, several thousand refugees came to Portugal during the occupation. Given that terrible humanitarian situations occur all around the globe, and that very few Portuguese had ever been to Timor (and vice-versa),¹³ it is only the common language and culture, the belief that “they are one of us” that can explain this phenomenon and its resonance with Portuguese public opinion. As mentioned in Magalhães (1999), Portuguese leaders took every step they could to solve the problem, and to this date still a significant number of Portuguese teachers and experts travel to Timor to help build the country. Also, as discussed by Esperança (2001) and Goglia & Afonso (2012), Portuguese as a language has significant (symbolic) weight in East Timor for several different reasons.

5.3 The orthographical agreement

Another interesting example which I would like to bring here is the last orthographical agreement among all countries that have Portuguese as official language, which – because it concerns one of the most important values for the people – has to be ratified by the parliaments of each country.¹⁴ After hot fights and discussions in their countries, publishers in Portugal and Brazil followed the law and changed the orthography in their books as dictated by the law. This is not a particularly interesting issue, were it not for the fact that Angola¹⁵ decided to reject the agreement and continue to write in “old Portuguese”. The majority of the population may not be native speaker of Portuguese, but their Portuguese is not going to be agreed upon by other countries! Given that there are significant economical advantages in sharing the same orthography, it seems foolish not to harmonize with the others – but only foolish if you do not understand the emotional value of a language. The argument, in fact, for not ratifying the agreement was based on the claim that the agreement did not contemplate changes in Angolan Portuguese.

5.4 How to establish a digital language policy for Portuguese

13 Contrary to Portuguese Africa, a source and a target very present in Portugal, for centuries.

14 On the history of Brazilian legal spelling reforms, see Faulstich (1999).

15 See

http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acordo_Ortográfico_de_1990#Angola [last access 21 May 2014]

If there is one area in Portugal in which all political forces are together, such area is language, as cultural heritage and pride, so it is not surprising that different governments have always tried to do something about language “promotion”. What I can offer here is simply a testimony of some of the moves in the digital era for supporting Portuguese, given my own role as a minor actor in the establishment of language politics.

Minor as it is, my own personal experience can be suggestive of the different turns that linguistic identity in a digital age can take.

From starting to defend our national variety from Brazilianisms, even developing a machine translation prototype between the two varieties (Santos & Eng, 1993), I soon came to the conclusion that the strength and the momentum was in joining all varieties of Portuguese in order to improve its computational processing, and that the right way to proceed would be doing a general grammar which catered for the many varieties of Portuguese. This was proposed to Microsoft Research in 1998, but they did not want, at that time, to invest in Portuguese – reasons for this are not open to me, since obviously we had no access to their business secrets or partner alternatives.

Still, I got the chance to do something in that spirit, now in a purely public way, commissioned by the Portuguese authorities. After a national (in fact, even international, if one counts the international experts) meeting to discuss what should be done, see Santos (1999), Linguateca was born, as far as I know the largest and oldest resource center/network for a single language, inspired by the American Linguistic Data Consortium (LDC), but whose organization had to be different due to the different characteristics of research in the different countries.¹⁶ In Linguateca, linguists, scientists and engineers share their tools and language resources for the computational processing of their language, while also several evaluation contests for Portuguese were devised and organized.

After fifteen years of existence and acknowledgment by most of the community (seen by the different resources we give access to and by the many different users who acknowledge their use), I believe to be fair to say that we have set up a large infrastructure for studying not only language, but culture as well, see Santos (2014) for its latest presentation.

¹⁶ Linguateca does not to earn money by distributing the resources as ELDA, the European Language Distribution Agency, does, nor is/was it possible to have a consortium of paying language resource companies as in LDC, whose activities are supported by membership of industry and users alike. To have an impact, we needed to make all resources free. (People who want to support us do it with resources or work.)

Nowadays my intention is to go even further and not only work for all varieties of Portuguese to be correctly described and processed, but to propose an international Portuguese variety (a watered down *lingua franca* for people to communicate in, and for foreigners to write in), to allow the best communication across lusophone countries, in the wake of Portuguese wikipedia and the several digital international channels in Portuguese.

5.5 And Brazil?

Brazil has already been mentioned as the center of gravity of the Portuguese language, and in fact, Brazil has played for more than three centuries the role of the new world (Portuguese version): it was the Eldorado, the future, and the new. There is hardly a family in Portugal who has not one (or more) family members who “disappeared” into Brazil. Brazil was the way to get rich, the way to start a new life, the land of opportunity (and even the land of escape, as late as the 70s, for the rich oligarchy after the 1974 revolution). As already mentioned, a cursory examination of the Portuguese literature of the XIX century shows the importance of “Brazilians”, that is, Portuguese who emigrated to Brazil and came back, as well as (the description of) the architectural marks of those new rich in the landscape.

Brazilians proper, on the other hand, were busy appropriating themselves of Portuguese, that is, devising new ways of speaking the language that were not old and overseas, and redefining their history as sons of Indians (and later, in the XX century, recognizing and emphasizing the African influence). While most scholars today recognize this as a romantic exaggeration – in fact instigated by the Brazilian emperor Pedro II, who commissioned works of art on Brazilian roots – it is still to this date a hot (linguistic) debate in Brazil on whether the features of contemporary Brazilian Portuguese are mostly due to (1) the inherent variability of Portuguese as a global language, (2) a creole from African slaves, or (3) the emergence of a new “language”/grammar due to the specific characteristics of the large Brazilian nation – see Castilho (2007) for this synthesis, and Naro & Scherre (2007) and Mello et al. (2011) for different positions. Mattos e Silva (s/d), a renowned Brazilian scholar, makes the interesting point that historical linguistics has much greater weight in Brazil than in Portugal.

While this is not the place to discuss the linguistic data and arguments, let me emphasize that there is a tremendous wealth of studies and arguments that shows in itself how important (again) the language is for Brazilians and for their definition as people and country. Brazil has been

subject to a large number of language-political decrees ever since Marquês de Pombal, and the debate on what to teach and what is or should be the norm is dear to all Brazilians – see e.g. Possenti (2006) and Faraco (2008). Yet another proof that the Portuguese language is extremely relevant for Brazilian identity (as well).

These widely different cases, which explain the title of the paper, are meant to show how important the Portuguese language is for all lusophone “subjects”, and how constitutive of national identities and prides.

Concluding remarks

Identity is an important factor both for life (“not only of bread lives man”, says the Bible) and for death, not only at the individual level but especially at the collective level, as illustrated pointedly by Diamond (2005).

Sobral (2003) warns us, however, that the ideas of national identity and national history are far from homogeneous even in the intellectual elites of a country, so by necessity this text cannot but ultimately reflect my own thoughts and experience, as a minor actor in Portuguese language politics.

While building up teaching around Portuguese-speaking language and culture due to my recent position at the University of Oslo, matters such as identity and the role of language became paramount. This forced me to think about these issues, despite coming from quite a different academic background. My own personal experience of emigration naturally directed my attention to what to be Portuguese – and lusophone – meant, and forced me to consider what essentially formed my view of the world, and how to transmit it to my (bilingual) children. In a way, this explains the obvious lack of scholarship undoubtedly displayed in the present text. Still, its purpose is modest: I want simply to offer some remarks and pointers that may help students and colleagues to research the subject, if only to correct my shortcomings or add relevant material.

My own concrete work in building up *Linguateca*, a network, platform and a forum to allow all Portuguese-speaking researchers in this modern computer-assisted world to investigate, work and create in Portuguese can, at this stage, be brought in in two different ways.

On the one hand, by analysing the corpus materials gathered, one could investigate the concepts and the discourses of different times and different places, not least in the lusophone literary works, a research program in which I intend to embark soon. On the other hand, doing all the basic infrastructural work showed a lot that unites lusophone world citizens, but uncovered as well other difficulties for our international language: regionally enforced bureaucratic requirements, for example from the

European Union or other international bodies, force unnatural and unproductive publication in English about our language, and stigmatize production in Portuguese as second-level quality. Which is the last misadventure of Portuguese which I report here.

While this kind of article, meant for a foreign and non-lusophone-aware audience, is no doubt appropriately written in a foreign language, most of the discussion about national identities and about the language itself should clearly be conducted in Portuguese – and then translated if needed, for different targets. Because, as B.S. Santos claimed with his “epistemicide” concept, different cultures and different languages embody different know-hows and world views, which globalization, requiring one way only to write and think, is killing. While B.S. Santos (2011) is mainly arguing for southern epistemologies, which include many other cultures even less privileged, I am in favour of preserving the one(s) possible in Portuguese (see Bennett, 2007, 2010), and intend to work actively for this goal.

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