

**Cultural cognitive models of language variation:  
Romanticism and rationalism in language policy debates about the unity/diversity of  
European and Brazilian Portuguese**

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Cognitive Linguistics has stressed the idea that we think about social reality in terms of *cultural cognitive models* (Dirven, Frank & Pütz 2003; Sharifian 2011). As any language is a social and cultural phenomenon, it is relevant to ask which cultural cognitive models we use to categorize and attitudinally evaluate local and national language variation. This is one of the research questions of Cognitive Sociolinguistics (Kristiansen & Dirven 2008; Geeraerts, Kristiansen & Peirsman 2010). Geeraerts (2003) identifies two competing ideological models of language standardization, namely the *rationalist* model and the *romantic* model. In this paper, we will research the cultural cognitive models underlying perception and attitudes towards European and Brazilian Portuguese, the two standard varieties of Portuguese. We will analyze language policy and standardization debates, including the debate in turn of the recent spelling agreement. Romantic and rationalist models shape puristic (converging) and pro-independence (diverging) attitudes towards Portuguese as a *pluricentric* language (Clyne 1992). This study is an extension of our sociolectometrical research on convergence and divergence between the two national varieties of Portuguese (Soares da Silva 2010).

In Brazil, the *romantic convergent model* underlies a conservative normativism, an ideology of identity nationalism and social exclusion and the myth that “EP is a pure unchanged language, while BP is borrowed and corrupt”. In Portugal, the same model shapes a neo-colonialist stance, according to which miscegenation leads to the corruption and impoverishment of a hypothetically “authentic” Portuguese tongue. On the opposite, the *rationalist convergent model* underlies the “superior unity” of the Portuguese language and proclaims linguistic unity as a strategy of economic and political establishment in the transcontinental contexts. The *romantic diverging model* is manifested by scientific positions that argue for the existence of a specifically *Brazilian language*. Social expressions include the translation into BP of Portuguese films. On the contrary, the *rationalist divergent attitude* is adopted by those that consider the valorization, study and teaching of the Brazilian urban standards to be an important instrument for political and educational participation, and a basis of civic nationalism and liberal democracy.

We will also analyze the contribution of conceptual metaphors of language to these opposing ideologies and the influence of these romantic and rationalist models in the pluricentricity of Portuguese. Specifically, it is likely that the two national varieties will continue to diverge, and that this process will receive a strong impetus in Brazil both from the romantic affirmation of the Brazilian tongue and from the rationalist attitude towards civic nationalism. Interruptions or reversals in the expected divergence are also possible, brought about by the rationalist attitude that protects the unity of the language as a form of political and economic affirmation in the present transcontinental global context.

## References

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