

Cultural cognitive models of language variation:

Romanticism and rationalism in language
policy debates about the unity/diversity of
European and Brazilian Portuguese

Augusto Soares da Silva

Catholic University of Portugal – Braga

assilva@braga.ucp.pt

ICLC-12

University of Alberta, Canada, 23-28 June 2013

Starting-point

- **Cognitive Linguistics** and cultural cognitive models (Holland & Quinn 1987; Lakoff 1996; Dirven, Frank & Pütz 2003; Sharifian 2011)
- **Cognitive Sociolinguistics** (Kristiansen & Dirven 2008; Geeraerts, Kristiansen & Peirsman 2010; Kristiansen & Geeraerts 2013) and cultural cognitive models of language variation
- 2 **cultural models** of linguistic standardization (Geeraerts 2003): the **rationalist** & **romantic** model
- our previous sociolectometrical research (Soares da Silva 2010, 2013) point in the direction of **divergence** between European and Brazilian Portuguese

Research questions

- What cultural cognitive models underlie the language policy debates about the unity/diversity of European and Brazilian Portuguese?
- How do these cultural cognitive models influence the convergence/divergence between the two national varieties?

Overview

1. Background: the pluricentricity of Portuguese
2. Cultural cognitive models of Portuguese pluricentricity
3. How much influence?

1

Background: the pluricentricity of
Portuguese

The pluricentricity of Portuguese

- Portuguese is a **pluricentric** language (Clyne 1992): European Portuguese (EP), Brazilian Portuguese (BP) and other standards in development
- Portuguese comes closest to **symmetric pluricentricity**:
 - the balance between the time supremacy and the spatial supremacy
 - the increasing awareness of the importance of the pluricentricity of Portuguese in socio-political, economic and cultural terms

European and Brazilian varieties

- differences between EP and BP at all linguistic levels
- BP presents a situation of diglossia and also a wide lectal continuum
- an increasing standardization of EP has been observed since the 1974 democratic revolution
- both Brazilian and Portuguese linguists are divided on the issue of the diversity which Portuguese presents (see *Fórum dos Linguistas*, <http://cvc.instituto-camoes.pt/conhecer/bases-tematicas/historia-da-lingua-portuguesa.html>)

Con/divergence between EP & BP: sociolectometrical approach

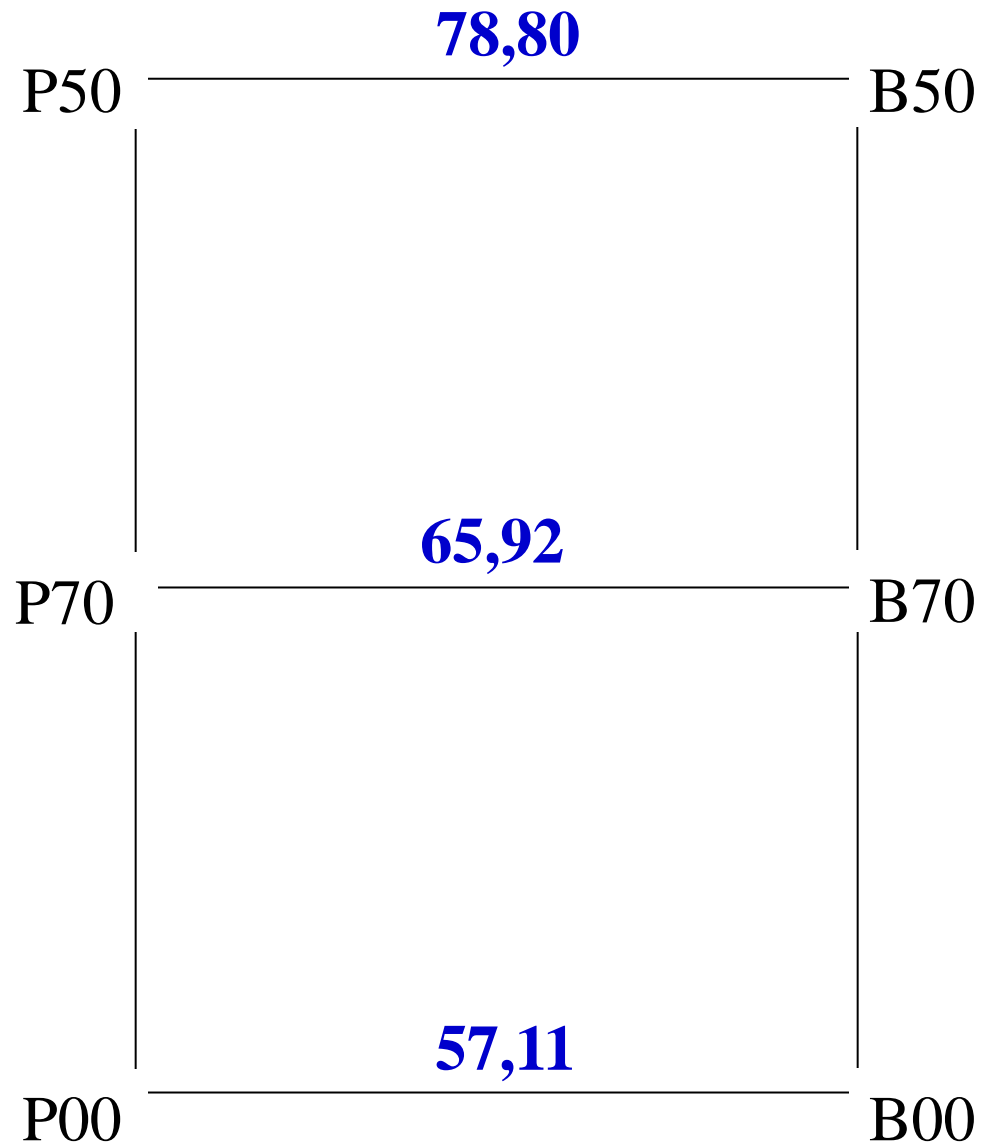
Soares da Silva (2010, 2013)

- **onomasiological** approach: onomasiological variation between denotational synonyms
- **diachronic** analysis over the last 60 years: materials from the 1950s, 1970s and 1990s/2000s
- advanced corpus-based and sociolectometrical methods: **uniformity measures** based on onomasiological profiles (i.e. sets of alternative synonymous words/constructions, together with their frequencies)

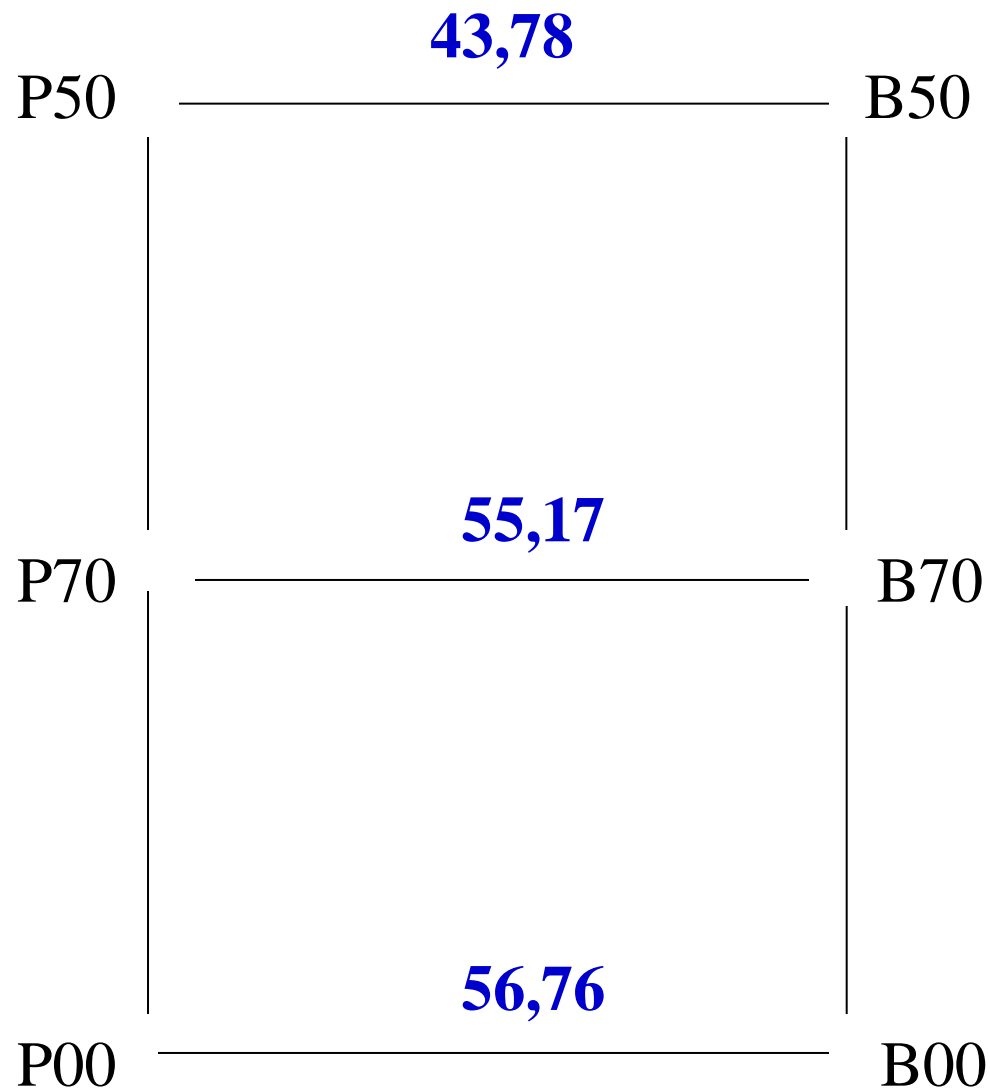
Con/divergence between EP & BP: sociolectometrical approach

Soares da Silva (2010, 2013)

- **lexical** variables: football and clothing terms – 43 nominal concepts
 - results: clear **divergence** in clothing terminology and **slight convergence** in football terminology
- **constructional** variables: prepositional, finite/infinitival, and noun-adjective constructions
 - results: **divergence**
- **attitudinal** variables: survey on attitudinal intentions with regard to the use and origins of 15 clothing concepts
 - results: **divergence**



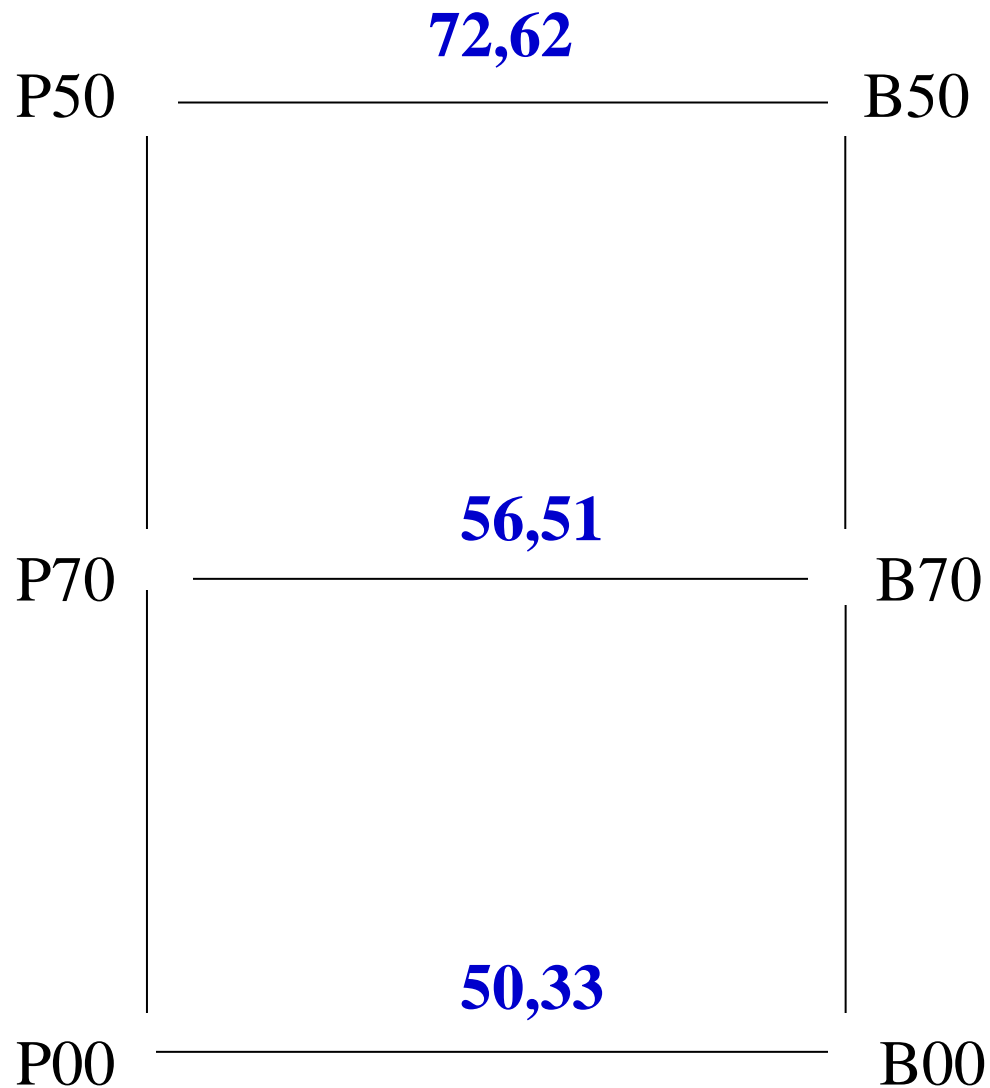
Clothing: 22 onomasiological profiles (264 terms), 12,451 observations



Football: 21 onomasiological profiles (183 terms), 90,202 observations

P50	68,74	B50
P70	54,39	B70
P00	48,64	B00

Prepositional constructions: 1,730 observations



Finite/infinitival constructions: 1,385 observations

2

Cultural cognitive models of Portuguese pluricentricity

Cultural models of Portuguese pluricentricity

- corpus: books on language policy, opinion articles and grammar columns in the press, political speeches (by politicians, writers, grammarians, linguists and other intellectuals)
- 4 models
 - romantic convergent model
 - rationalist convergent model
 - romantic divergent model
 - rationalist divergent model

The romantic convergent model

in Brazil

- dogmatic normativism (imposing a literary EP)
- against errors everywhere and loanwords
- ideology of social exclusion
- linguistic myth: “EP is a pure unchanged language, while BP is borrowed and corrupt”

in Portugal

- Brazilian forms are invaders
- movement against the recent spelling agreement
- a neo-colonialist stance: miscegenation leads to the corruption of an ‘authentic’ Portuguese tongue

The rationalist convergent model

- the idea of “unity in diversity” or the “superior unity” of the Portuguese language
- the economic value of Portuguese: 17% of Portuguese GDP and 3.85% of world GDP
- linguist unity is an *opportunity* for Portuguese to project itself as a language of international communication and economic affirmation
- some Brazilian linguists for whom “there is nothing in Brazilian Portuguese that does not exist in Portugal” (Naro & Scherre 2007)

The romantic divergent model

- Brazilian national identity and a specifically *Brazilian language*
- the most influential scientific expression: “The ecology is different, the ethnic makeup is different, the culture is different. Why, then, should language be the only thing that is the same?” (Bagno 2001: 176)
- social factors: the subtitling of interviews with Portuguese youngsters on the MTV television channel and Portuguese people on the TV Globo, and the subtitling and translation into BP of Portuguese films

The rationalist divergent model

- the study and teaching of the Brazilian urban standard(s) as an important instrument for political and educational participation, and a basis of *civic nationalism* and liberal democracy
- this attitude is manifested in large-scale language research projects in Brazil, and in literacy projects and plans for educational reform in Brazil
- the “Portuguese language” is no more than an *illusive* notion of a historical, cultural and political nature

Paradoxes and blends

- each cultural model has convergent and divergent attitudes
- paradoxes of the romantic model: purity and independence of Portuguese
- paradoxes of the rationalist model: “superior unity” and functional diversity of Portuguese
- blends: discourses on *lusophonony* as a space for plural cultures and a factor of economic relevance, on the high economic potential of Portuguese and on the spelling agreement

3

Applying the models

How much influence?

The **romantic model** and the concept of **identity**:

- “lusophone” identity \Rightarrow convergence
(cf. the orthographic agreement, the promoting of lusophony and normative purism)
- identity specif. Portuguese/Brazilian \Rightarrow divergence
(cf. the movement against the orthographic agreement and the defense of a Brazilian language)

The **rationalist model** and **benefits** of unity/diversity:

- promotion of economic and political power of the Portuguese \Rightarrow convergence
- defense of civic nationalism and democratization of education in Brazil \Rightarrow divergence

How much influence?

1. the romantic affirmation of the Brazilian tongue & the rationalist attitude towards civic nationalism and the democratization of education: **diverging effect**
2. the rationalist attitude towards civic nationalism > reduction of the marked diglossia: **converging effect**
3. the rationalist attitude towards the unity of the language as a form of political and economic affirmation: **interruptions or reversals** in the expected process of continuing divergence

Conclusion

1. our thinking about language variation and pluricentricity is shaped by **romantic and rationalist** cultural models
2. romantic and rationalist cultural models shape purist and pro-independence (**converging and diverging**) attitudes towards relations between the European and Brazilian varieties of Portuguese
3. romantic and rationalist cultural models may influence the development of the two national varieties, probably in the direction of **continued divergence**

Thank you!

assilva@braga.ucp.pt

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