Attitudes toward Portuguese in Uruguay in the nineteenth century

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The Uruguay-Brazil border has been a porous geographical area since colonial times, giving rise to intense contact between Portuguese and Spanish, further fostered by a shared economic and demographic foundation. Here we analyze attitudes toward border Portuguese and that language in general in the Uruguayan territory during the Luso-Brazilian military occupation (1816–1828) and later in the century and identify two parallel realities: a predominant neutral attitude toward Portuguese, as the language was not an object of evaluation; and the existence of negative attitudes toward Portuguese promoted by the authorities in Montevideo. In absence of diachronic attitude studies, we developed an ad hoc methodology to document and describe this dual reality, drawing on legislative documents, government archives, press, and literary pieces.

Keywords: attitudes, Portuguese, Uruguay, 19th century

Presentation

The area that is currently on the Uruguay-Brazil border is a highly porous region that has seen intense contact between Portuguese and Spanish ever since colonial times. This contact has received the attention of many researchers who have worked mainly from a synchronic perspective, including Rona (1965), Hensey (1972, 1984), Elizaincín (1975, 1978, 1992), Behares (1984), Elizaincín, Barrios, & Behares (1987), and Carvalho (2003), among others. In the twenty-first century, this language contact has been addressed by a host of diachronic research projects (Bertolotti & Coll, 2010, 2014; Bertolotti, Caviglia, & Coll, 2003–2004; Bertolotti, Caviglia, Coll, & Fernández, 2005a, 2005b; Caviglia & Fernández, 2007; Coll, 2008, 2009; Groppi, 2007; Moyna & Coll, 2008; Ramírez Luengo, 2005). These works have been aimed at identifying documentary sources that evidence contact between the two languages throughout the nineteenth century, characterizing that contact, describing the displacement historically suffered by Portuguese in favor of Spanish, and showing the
original situation of bilingualism without diglossia. Efforts have also been made to historically identify and analyze the shared lexical heritage.¹

However, thus far there have been no studies on the emergence of language attitudes toward the Portuguese language – that is, the explicit or indirect opinions regarding the presence of Lusophone language modalities – in nineteenth century Uruguayan society. In this sense, this chapter has a double aim. We begin by analyzing, for the first time and explicitly, the attitudes toward Portuguese in the territory of Uruguay from a historical perspective. We then propose a methodology for the study of attitudes, based primarily on information found in archival documents and combined with literary and legal texts.

With these aims in mind, after a brief overview of the historical and political situation of this region, in the following section we address the language attitude studies conducted in Uruguay. After presenting our methodology, we look at the attitudes toward the Portuguese language during the Luso-Brazilian occupation of the territory that is now Uruguay. Then we focus on the attitudes toward border Portuguese at a later time in the nineteenth century. We conclude with a discussion and a synthesis of our analysis.

Historical and political conditions

At both the regional and local level, there is a long history of contact between Portuguese and Spanish in Latin America. As pointed out by Bracco, throughout the first years of the European conquest, the border area formed on the Plata River basin was a vast territory without any significant natural barriers, and over which no one actor had the power to control the others. Spaniards, Portuguese and various Indigenous peoples, mainly Tupi-Guarani, all interacted there (Bracco, 2004, p. 40). With respect to the effective colonization of these lands, the first European settlement established in this present-day Spanish-speaking region was Colônia do Sacramento (1680), founded by the Portuguese on the eastern margin of the Plata River. This foundation materialized the strong Lusitanian threat to the Spanish Crown and was a concrete manifestation of a more general intention of connecting Brazil with the rest of South America.² The very history of the foundation of Montevideo (a process spanning from 1724 to 1730) can ultimately be seen as a response to the threat posed by the Portuguese Crown’s settlement in the area.

¹ The R&D research projects Historia del portugués en el Uruguay and Lexicología bilingüe español-portugués. El caso de la región fronteriza uruguayo-brasileña, conducted from 2002 to 2004 and 2005 to 2007, respectively, with funding from Comisión Sectorial de Investigación Científica at Universidad de la República, fostered some of these diachronic research initiatives about Portuguese in Uruguay.

² The same intention was behind the Lusitanian occupation of the Jesuit Missions in 1801.

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Much like the European territories called “marches” during the Middle Ages, the Banda Oriental (or Eastern Bank, as the territory located to the east of the Plata River was known during colonial times) functioned as a “boundary marker” between the Portuguese and Spanish empires (Reyes Abadie, Bruschera, & Melogno, 1974), as it was a border zone where conflicts and disputes were constantly arising. This term reflects the idea of the existence of a territory that had a defensive value, similarly to the medieval marches, because of its location on the frontier between two empires.

One of the consequences of the struggles between the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns in the Banda Oriental was that, from the beginning, Portuguese settlers and Spaniards lived side by side in close interaction, particularly in the area that is today northern Uruguay. There was also a brief Lusitanian occupation from 1811 to 1812, and later a Luso-Brazilian occupation that lasted from 1816 to 1828, known as the Cisplatine period. We will come back to this stage in section Attitudes toward Portuguese at the time of the Luso-Brazilian occupation.

Estimates provided by census calculations from the late nineteenth century put the number of Brazilians living in northern and eastern Uruguay at 40,000. That is, 20 percent of the country’s total population, which at the time stood at 200,000. It has been pointed out that as of 1854 there were almost no inhabitants of Spanish origin in these areas (Mena Segarra, 2004, p. 7), as illustrated in the map below.

![Figure 1. Current map of Uruguay showing the area occupied by Brazilian landowners in 1850 (shaded area). Adapted from the design by Palermo (2015).](image-url)

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In response to this predominance of Brazilian inhabitants, the Uruguayan nation-state (whose process of independence from Spain and Portugal ended in 1828) started to take a number of actions. Among these were a series of settlements (Cuareim, Treinta y Tres, Villa Artigas, and Villa Ceballos) founded in the northern region of the country between 1853 and 1862 at the proposal of Congress, with the goal of countering the advancing Brazilian presence.

A little over a decade later, in 1877, with the aim of making elementary education available to all, the Uruguayan government issued a decree regulating public instruction (*Decreto-Ley Reglamento de Instrucción Pública*), based on the Common Education Act (*Ley de Educación Común*) drafted by politician and educator José Pedro Varela. As we will see below, while it was not specifically stipulated in the decree, children would be schooled in Spanish. In this way, the Spanish language was imposed on the border population. With this action by the central government, who saw the presence of Portuguese at the border as a threat, the use of Spanish spread over the Portuguese linguistic base, resulting in the current situation where what is known as “Uruguayan Portuguese dialects” coexist diglossically with Spanish.

**Studies on language attitudes in Uruguay**

In this study we look at language attitudes in the sense of shared evaluations whereby a language (Portuguese, for example) or a situation of language contact (between Spanish and Portuguese, in this case) is associated with specific social values. As we will see, such values were linked to Uruguay’s process of construction as a monolingual nation at the end of the nineteenth century. We will see the attitudes expressed in the writings of social actors (politicians, writers, educators) living in Montevideo, the country’s capital city, in particular with respect to the bilingual context of the Uruguay-Brazil border.

While most existing studies on language attitudes are synchronic, analyzing language attitudes in diachrony is not necessarily new. Pioneering works in this sense include a 1982 study by St., who argues that to “understand fully how language attitudes develop, it may be necessary to reach back into the past and investigate the social and political forces operating within the history of a nation” (St. Clair, 1982, p. 164). In the section Neutral Attitudes we will come back to the manifestations of the social and political forces that formed the Uruguayan nation. While there are some diachronic studies on language attitudes in this region, they do not deal specifically with Portuguese. Bugel (2015) has studied the local representations of how the British spoke in Montevideo, thus allowing for a reflection on language attitudes in the nineteenth century. Bertolotti (2011) explains the historical reasons...
for the attitudes toward *tuteo* and *voseo* that give the system of singular forms of address in Uruguay its own peculiarity. Coll (2010, 2012) focuses on European and local representations of how African and Indigenous peoples spoke, a theme that is certainly linked to language attitudes.

As for previous synchronic studies on Uruguay, we have the pioneering analysis by Khül de Mones (1981) regarding the attitudes of Montevideo inhabitants toward the name of their language, toward the varieties of Spanish, and toward *voseo*. This author also examines the opinions of the Montevideo population regarding the influence of the media (press and TV) on language. Weyer (2013) studied the attitudes toward *tuteo* and *voseo*, while Weyer and Canale (2013) approached the same subject focusing on the classroom. García de los Santos (2014) researches current linguistic attitudes held by the people of Montevideo toward other language varieties inside and outside Uruguay, following a review of articles related to this subject. One of the conclusions she arrives at is that her survey respondents – who are from Montevideo, that is, inhabitants of the capital of the country, located in the south and far from the border – have a negative attitude both toward Portuguese and toward contact varieties.4

Bugel (2012) addresses the issue of attitudes toward the Rio de la Plata and peninsular varieties of Spanish, and in 2013 examines the attitudes toward Spanish and Portuguese varieties in the regional context, while also looking at such attitudes with respect to how these varieties are taught (Bugel, 2013). Waltermire (2014) focuses on the variety of Spanish spoken at the Uruguay-Brazil border and how the attitude its speakers have toward Portuguese affects changes at the phonological level.

**Methodology**

Although Agheyisi and Fishman (1970) provide a detailed review of the methodology that can be applied to the study of language attitudes, there is no reference to diachronic studies of attitudes. However, it is important to highlight these authors’ insistence that “Validation of attitude studies is particularly problematic because of the very nature of attitudes as properties of the psychological or mental process” (Agheyisi & Fishman, 1970, p. 150). We would like to add that validating attitude studies is even more complex when time is included as a variable, given that researchers cannot elicit the data they are interested in. Rather, they have to try to access such data by means of deduction, proceeding through wide range hermeneutics, drawing on different written testimonies that have been preserved.

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4. This research is part of a larger project about attitudes toward Latin American Spanish, conducted by researchers whose work is guided by professors at the University of Bergen, Norway.
Given that we are focusing on the nineteenth century, we have to do without the more classical tools of language attitude analysis, such as those that aim at indirectly exploring attitudes through matched-guise or verbal-guise techniques (as described by Lambert, 1967 or Garrett, 2010). Neither is explicit exploration of attitudes possible, either by way of questionnaires or through interviews (as described by Garret, Coupland, & Williams, 2003). The studies that have looked at attitudes from a diachronic perspective cannot be replicated for our purposes.

Nevertheless, we consider two precedents similar to a study such as ours. The first one is by St. Clair (1982), who analyzes the attitudes in a past synchrony using standardized tests, teacher training courses, legislation, and government manuals. The second one is by Kramarae (1982), who in her work on attitudes toward how women speak, analyzes proverbs, protocol and etiquette books, cartoons, and commentaries regarding the relevance of feminine voices in the media. In our case, with the exception of legislation, none of the sources mentioned above are available for the time period and the region studied (either because these types of writing did not exist at the time or because they have not been preserved). For this reason, we applied a methodology designed by us especially for this study. We thus focus on language attitudes as constituent elements present in, or even absent from, discourse (Garrett, Coupland, & Williams, 2003). We do this by considering the following types of written texts: legislative documents; documents found in judicial or government archives; pieces published in the press; and literary writings.

Legislative documents

The analysis and interpretation of legislation contributes to the understanding of how language attitudes mask attitudes toward those who use a language other than one’s own (Garrett, 2010). Here we have analyzed the often referenced Common Education Act (1877) and its corresponding Decree-Law for the Regulation of Public Instruction, also adopted in 1877. We also consider the Organic Notarial Act (Decree-Law No. 1421) of 31 December 1878, Law No. 2152 of 30 April 1891, and a law from 28 June 1902. To the extent of our knowledge, ours is the first study to consider these last three regulations.

Documents found in judicial or government archives

The archival material that we analyzed is part of a corpus built with the goal of documenting and analyzing the presence of Portuguese in Uruguay throughout history. This corpus includes approximately one hundred documents published in Bertolotti, Caviglia, Coll, and Fernández (2005a and b). They were retrieved from the following document repositories: (1) Archivo General de la Nación (National
General Archive) – (a) in the Judiciary section, files 1 (1838–1854), 2 (1855–1856), 15 (1873–1874), and 94 (1892), corresponding to the department of Tacuarembó; boxes 3 (1826), 4 (1828) and 5 (1829), corresponding to the department of Cerro Largo; (b) in the Government and Economy Ministry Notary section, files 128, 129 and 140 (1822–1825); and (2) Fondo Archivo Aparicio Saravia (Aparicio Saravia Archive Collection), held by the Historical Studies Center of the Armed Forces (Comando General del Ejército, Estado Mayor del Ejército, Centro de Estudios Históricos) – all 21 boxes (1894–1900). Some documents were also gleaned from texts that were already published and that contain archival documents, such as Archivo Artigas (volumes 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 18, 28, and 31–33) and Revista Histórica, published by the National History Museum (volume 35). 5

Pieces published in the press

The press reviewed included the following newspapers: El deber cívico (1896–1901), available at the National Library (Montevideo, Uruguay); La verdad (1897–1900) and La France (1908), available at the Artigas Library in the city of Rivera, located on the border with Brazil; O canabarro (1894–1896), O cidadao (1886), and El Debate (early twentieth century), all of them available at Musée da Folha Popular, in the city of Livramento (Brazil), Rivera’s twin city. Some issues of the daily newspapers O Maragato (1908) and La Voz de Rivera (February 1886), which are part of the private collection held by professor Selva Chirico, were also consulted.

Literary writings

In addition, our analysis includes some literary pieces by nineteenth century writers, where they illustrate the presence of Portuguese speakers in the city of Montevideo during the Lusitanian occupation. Moreover, we examined writings by educators and politicians that have been published by other researchers, indicating the source accordingly in each case.

In sum, based on the study of a variety of sources and considering them against their social, political, and cultural context, we have drawn a series of inferences with respect to attitudes toward modalities of Portuguese spoken in the nineteenth century in present-day Uruguay.

5. Uruguay is currently divided into 19 political-administrative sections called departments. Tacuarembó is one of them. It is located in northern Uruguay and originally covered more territory, extending to the border with Brazil. Cerro Largo is another department, located on the eastern part of Uruguay, and it borders with Brazil.
Attitudes toward Portuguese at the time of the Luso-Brazilian occupation

As noted above, the so-called Luso-Brazilian invasions that started in 1816 culminated with the annexation of the Banda Oriental to the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and Algarves, and later to the Empire of Brazil (until 1828). Such a situation obviously imposed an intense contact between the Spanish and Portuguese languages, mainly in Montevideo. Research regarding that period (historically known as the Cisplatine) confirms the presence of the Portuguese language in communications from the authorities to the inhabitants of the annexed area, although correspondence in Spanish between Portuguese officers has also been preserved (Bertolotti et al., 2005a; Caviglia, Bertolotti, & Coll, 2008). In that period, judicial records and proceedings were written in either Spanish or Portuguese, and even in both Spanish and Portuguese. That is, we found that the use of both languages was optional in this type of documents, with no mention whatsoever of the fact that more than one language was being used.

In 1821, during the Cisplatine Conference, the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil, and Algarves approved the annexation of the Provincia Oriental. The document stipulating the annexation states that the uses and customs of the land shall be respected, establishes the geographical borders of the province, declares that the province shall be different from the other states, and grants independence to its civilian and military authorities. There is, however, no mention of the language that will be used in the province, but it should be noted that the annexation document was written in Spanish (Bertolotti & Coll, 2014, p. 54).

There is also literature available from this period, with accounts that reveal a different reality from that evidenced in official documents. The poet Francisco Acuña de Figueroa sarcastically criticized what he observed in Montevideo society, using irony to describe the mixing of languages. This in turn allowed him to disguise, to a certain extent, his actual criticism of the ways in which the inhabitants of Montevideo had adopted foreign fashion and other cultural elements. In other words, with his negative attitude toward the Portuguese language he conveys his rejection of the invader. By resorting to poetry, he can also temper his criticism through rhyme and mockery. In a poem titled Carta familiar en la que el autor refiere varios sucesos personales, y satiriza las locuciones portuguesas que se han pegado al idioma (“Family letter in which the author relates some personal experiences and satirizes the Portuguese terms that have stuck to the language”), Acuña de Figueroa uses irony to address the Portuguese loanwords found in the speech of his fellow Uruguayans. He focuses first directly on the language when he says:
The long domination
By this foreign nation
Our customs alters
Through a contagious medley:
Changing in a varying fusion
The national character:
And even in the language itself,
Foreignism wields
A fatal influence

(Acuña de Figueroa, 1890, p. 52)

The poet then includes and explains Portuguese words and expressions that he considers to be commonly used in Montevideo at the time. As we can see in the following passage, he describes how speakers substitute *obrigado* (‘obliged’, in Portuguese) for *mil gracias* (Spanish for ‘a thousand thanks’) when thanking someone; he comments on how newcomers announce themselves using the formula *¿da licencia?* (literally ‘Do I have a license’, similar to saying ‘May I?’, which in Spanish would be *permiso*); healludes to the use of the expression *dolor de dientes* instead of *dolor de muelas* (‘tooth ache’, instead of ‘molar ache’, the more idiomatic expression in Spanish); and points to the use of the Portuguese *brincos* for ‘earrings’ instead of the Spanish terms *zarcillos* or *pendientes*. These and other examples are found in the following passage:

(2) Debe hoy cualquier peralvillo,
Si quiere darse importancia.
Vestir con rara elegancia
Y tomar rapé ó polvillo:
Al obsequio de contado
*Mil gracias*, que es anticuado,
Y dirán que es un patán,
Que ahora las gracias se dan
Con decir solo *obrigado*

(Acuña de Figueroa, 1890, p. 52)⁶

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⁶ The bold is ours, the italics were in the original.
El llamar es indecencia
Cuando vaya á hacer visitas,
Pues dando tres palmaiditas.
Debe decir "¿Da licencia?"

(Acuña de Figueroa, 1890, p. 53)

Y á cualquier dolor de muelas
Llamará _dolor de dientes_
Los zarcillos ó pendientes
_Brincos_ se deben nombrar
Tomar sentido es cuidar
Un negro libre es un _forro_
Un perro es _can ó cachorro_

Y despacio es _de vagar_

(Acuña de Figueroa, 1890, p. 54)

Today any old _peralvillo_,
If he wants to show off
With rare elegance he must dress
And take snuff or powder:
Receiving a gift of cash with
_A thousand thanks_ is old-fashioned,
Branding you a lout,
As to be thankful now
You are simply _obrigado_

(Acuña de Figueroa, 1890, p. 52)

To call ahead is indecent
When going for a visit,
As clapping three times.
You must say "Da licencia?"

(Acuña de Figueroa, 1890, p. 53)

And any tooth ache
Is now _dolor de dientes_
Pendants or earrings
Are _brincos_
Tomar sentido is to be careful
A free black man is _forro_
A dog is a _can or cachorro_
And going slowly is _de vagar_

(Acuña de Figueroa, 1890, p. 54)

As we can see, Acuña de Figueroa illustrates this situation of language contact with examples from everyday life in a society where the Spanish-speaking locals live side by side with the Portuguese-speaking occupying forces. Besides denouncing the loans from Portuguese used in their Spanish, the author warns of the consequences of mixing Spanish and Portuguese. As can be seen in the example below, Acuña de Figueroa predicts that a _patagorrillo_ (a kind of stew) will result as a by-product of the coexistence of both languages:
The poet, a man connected with the press and the most cultured circles of society, allows himself to be critical, and his criticism is expressed through the sarcastic language of the above poem.

Some years into the Luso-Brazilian occupation, the locals rose up against the Brazilian army, with a campaign that began with the arrival of pro-independence forces led by the Treinta y Tres Orientales (Thirty-Three Easterners) in April 1825 and continued with victories at the battles of Rincón and Sarandí later that year. The prevailing atmosphere of this period is recreated by writer Eduardo Acevedo Díaz in his novel Grito de Gloria (1893). Faithfully reflecting the historical circumstances, he portrays a significant influx of Portuguese speakers in Montevideo, where that language appears very much alive. One of the main characters, the slave Guadalupe, hears Portuguese spoken around her as she moves through the city (Rivero, 2014). When she goes by the military detachment recently arrived from São Paulo (Brazil), the soldiers call out to her and we learn, through the voice of the narrator, how the slave perceives the language spoken by the soldiers (Portuguese), which she likens to “the murmur of grumpy insects buzzing in her ears” (Acevedo Díaz, [1893]1964, p. 142). Her attitude toward their language is clearly negative, as is her judgment of the speakers, whom Guadalupe’s master is combating.

While in the official documentation from the period of the Luso-Brazilian occupation, that stretched from 1816 until 1828, there are no explicit references to
language, the writings of Francisco Acuña de Figueroa and Eduardo Acevedo Díaz provide two examples of manifest opposition to the Portuguese language – and, naturally, toward its speakers, who represented the occupying forces. The type of accounts that enabled us to reach such considerations differs from the sources used to describe the attitudes toward the language situation at the border in the late nineteenth century, as we will see in the next section.

Attitudes toward Border Portuguese in Nineteenth Century Uruguay

Based on archival, journalistic, and legal documentation, as well as on speeches by politicians and educators, we infer the existence of two different types of attitudes toward the Portuguese spoken at the border in nineteenth century Uruguay. On the one hand, the Portuguese language was not an object of evaluation, and this might be seen as expressing a neutral attitude. On the other, there was a negative attitude toward that language stemming mainly from the country’s capital and during what was known as the “civilizing” period of the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Neutral attitudes

In Bertolotti et al. (2005a) we contributed evidence of how the Portuguese language appears naturalized in official records and proceedings well into the nineteenth century. We have documented the extent to which, in the north of the country and without any explicit mention of it, officers of the Uruguayan justice system would write in Portuguese and include numerous loans from Portuguese in their writings in Spanish as well. It was also common to see a court case file written in both languages, as we will see below. The absence of objections to that linguistic fact was also common at that time.

The documents compiled in Bertolotti et al. (2005a and 2005b) evidence the use of Portuguese, in a way that would be striking today in a state where the only official language is Spanish. Officers recording cases would often alternate between writing in Portuguese and writing in Spanish in the same file. Such is the case, for example, of document P45 retrieved from file 1, department of Tacuarembó (Archivo General de la Nación, Judiciales-AGNJ), of the year 1854, where a notice written by a deputy mayor in Portuguese alternates with a notice written in Spanish by Martínez, the court’s notary public:7

7. The examples are part of Corpus para la Historia del Portugués en el Uruguay, put together at Instituto de Lingüística, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, Universidad de la República, Montevideo, and partially published in Bertolotti et al. (2005a and 2005b).
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Both languages also alternate in a file from 1854 in which the deputy mayor Felisberto de Vargas writes a text in Portuguese, informing the mayor that he is forwarding a summons to him, written in Spanish and signed by Miguel Martínez, notary public. Vicente Illa, the recipient of the summons, replies in Portuguese that he will not respond to said summons (see Caviglia et al., 2008):
An action has been filed by Mister Jose Venancio de Sousa Guerra with the Ordinary Court of this Department, on behalf of Mister Pedro Chucarro, against Mister Vicente Ylla, demanding payment of certain sums of pesos; the said Ylla is summoned to appear before the Court to make his defense. (…) Furthermore, let it be done as requested. Inserted: Pascual Pittalgua. Before me, Miguel S. Martinez, Notary Public. And in compliance with what has been ordered, it is conveyed to the respective Deputy Mayor, Mister Felizberto de Bargas, so that he may communicate it. {Signed:} Miguel S. Martinez, Notary Public and of the Court.

[fol. 5v] (…) Honorable Mayor D Pascoal Pitaluva, I will not respond to the summons regarding Mister D Pedro Chucaro because I have not taken a loan from him. Summon my son Manoel Ylha, as it is he who has borrowed that money and the rest is with a lender, Mister Fransisco Esteve. God bless Your Honor. Tres Cerros, 11 June 1854. {Signed:} Vicente Ylha.

The above document reveals, as do other similar documents, that court officers of the government of Uruguay, by then firmly established as a nation, used Portuguese to communicate when performing their official duties. This attests to the depth and breadth of the use of that language in the country’s northern region. The 1830 Constitution required that in order to qualify as an officer of the court one had to “be a resident and have resided in the State for at least one year, uninterruptedly, before being appointed.” The requirements, however, did not include being a Uruguayan citizen and, much less, knowing how to speak or write in Spanish.

Nonetheless, with the increasing use of Spanish, through efforts arising in Montevideo, the presence of Portuguese in judicial documents decreased, as will be shown in the next section.

At least until the end of the nineteenth century, there do not appear to be any opinions regarding the Portuguese language in the regional press. No letters, vignettes, or cartoons alluding to Portuguese or to the contact between Spanish and Portuguese were found in our review of the press published in the border area. However, we did find texts written in Portuguese featured in the press, mainly in advertisements, thus indicating Portuguese readers. In newspapers written in Spanish, in the border city of Rivera, we found advertisements for medicines, a shoe
store, a clothing store, and a doctor all written in Portuguese (or in Spanish and Portuguese). This would suggest that the vitality of the Portuguese language within Uruguay was not questioned by the users of that language in the north. As we will see, it was the ruling classes in Montevideo who viewed the Portuguese language as a threat to national unity.

In order to study the situation in the private sphere, we consulted records kept by the family of Aparicio Saravia, one of Uruguay’s last great caudillos and leader of one of its two main political parties at the end of the nineteenth century. Given that the Saravia family was a prototypical border family in terms of its makeup, these documents are of great linguistic interest. The family’s personal papers have been preserved because of the prominent role played by the Saravias in Uruguayan politics. This was obviously not the case with other border families, who did not have a hand in writing the country’s history. Aparicio Saraiva (later Saravia) was the son of Francisco Chico Saraiva, who was originally from Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, and had settled in Uruguay in the mid nineteenth century, and of his wife, Pulpicia or Propicia Da Rosa, also Brazilian. Aparicio, in turn, married Cándida Diaz or Dias, who had a Brazilian father and a Uruguayan mother (Mena Segarra, 2004, p. 9–12). In the repository that is held by the Centro de Estudios Históricos at Comando General del Ejército, we found telegrams from Cándida Diaz to the caudillo (documents 66 and 67 in Bertolotti et al., 2005a) and letters addressed to military chiefs who were followers of Saravia, all of them written in Portuguese, whether the correspondence had to do with the war or family matters. Portuguese is also used in other items found in the Saravia archive, including some short notes, clothing distribution lists for Saravia’s troops, a certificate for a gift of cow hides (documents 65, 69, 74, and 75 in Bertolotti et al., 2005a), an anonymous love poem, and a prayer asking God for protection against the plague (written entirely in Portuguese). However, most of the documentation is in Spanish. It is precisely this presence of Spanish that indicates that, by the end of the century, Spanish was being used for communication in the private sphere, even in families like the Saravias, whose members had been born at the border. That is because formal education was in Spanish even there, given the presence of schools on the Uruguayan side.

Negative attitudes

In this section we identify the existence of negative attitudes by interpreting other types of data, namely: (a) the increasing absence of the Portuguese language in judicial documents (as mentioned in the previous section); (b) the existence of legislation that, among a host of other consequences, resulted in Spanish spreading across the border region; and (c) accounts and explicit observations that originated
Virginia Bertolotti and Magdalena Coll

126

in the political and educational circles of Montevideo and that censored the use of the Portuguese language in Uruguay.

In Bertolotti et al. (2005a, p. 20), the authors show the decreasing presence of the Portuguese language, as evidenced by the number of documents in Portuguese in the files from the border department of Tacuarembó (Archivo General de la Nación, Judiciales). While in file 1, encompassing the years 1833 to 1854, 33 percent of the documents are partially written in Portuguese or contain expressions that denote interference from Portuguese, in file 94, corresponding to the year 1892, the only presence of Portuguese is in a receipt written in that language and included as part of another document. Such a decrease in the use of the Portuguese language in administrative and judicial documents does not automatically indicate the disappearance of Portuguese in the north, but it certainly points to a deliberate decision not to write judicial case files in a language other than Spanish.

We have not found any legislation explicitly banning the use of Portuguese in written judicial documents. There is, however, legislation that allows us to infer how much ground Spanish had gained in that sphere. Law No. 1421, the Notarial Organic Act (Ley Orgánica Notarial), of 31 December 1878, includes stipulations, for example, regarding the need for bilingual witnesses in the drafting of wills. Article 44, section two, “Regarding the protocols and obligations of notaries,” stipulated as follows:

Art. 44.- Cuando el que quiere testar no conozca el idioma castellano, pero se exprese claramente y escriba otro idioma, podrá hacer testamento cerrado o abierto en esta forma:

En el primer caso lo presentará al Escribano, cerrado y lacrado, escribiendo en el sobre delante de aquel funcionario y de cinco testigos de los cuales tres, cuando menos, deben conocer el idioma del testador y el castellano a la vez, que dicho pliego “contiene su última voluntad”, escrita por él o por otro (nombrándolo), a su pedido y firmado por él […]

En el segundo caso, el testador presentará al Escribano el pliego que contenga su testamento, en el papel de la clase que corresponda al protocolo, firmado de su puño y letra, cuya presentación la hará ante dos intérpretes y tres testigos que conocen su idioma. Los intérpretes harán su traducción fiel y trasmitida al testador en presencia de los testigos y del Escribano, si aquél no tuviese observación que hacer, la suscribirá juntamente con los traductores y testigos. (Ley Orgánica Notarial)

Article 44. If the person intending to make a will does not speak Spanish, but can communicate clearly and write in another language, he may make a sealed or open will in the following way:

In the first case, the person will submit the will to the Notary, in a closed and sealed envelope, writing on the envelope in front of that Officer and of five witnesses – at least three of whom must know both the language of the person making the will and
Spanish – that said document “contains his last will,” written by him or by another person (providing the name of that person), at his request and signed by him […] 

In the second case, the person making the will shall submit to the Notary a document containing his will, in the type of paper corresponding to the protocol, signed by him in his own handwriting, and such submission shall be done in the presence of two interpreters and three witnesses who understand his language. The interpreters shall give a faithful translation and convey it to the will maker in the presence of the witnesses and the Notary, and if there are no observations to be made by the Notary, he shall sign it together with the translators and witnesses. 

(Notarial Organic Act)

This shows how the situation started to change, accompanying a process of linguistic adjustment, which we will also see when we examine the changes in the field of education. According to Tellechea (2005, p. 126), Article 65, paragraph 7, of the above law, which established the rules for notarial work in Uruguay, stipulated that notaries could not authorize deeds based on powers of attorney issued outside of Uruguay, if such powers were not properly translated into Spanish. Article 43 of Law No. 2152, of 30 April 1891, also established as a general rule that any documents executed abroad, if issued in a foreign language, had to be accompanied by a duly authorized translation. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a law of 28 June 1902 also indicated that translations had to be done by sworn translators licensed in the country.

Another type of data that has allowed us to document the negative attitudes toward the presence of varieties of Portuguese are, as we have mentioned before, the accounts and explicit observations made in the sphere of education and politics that, from Montevideo, censored the presence of the Portuguese language in Uruguay.

In his writings regarding government work during the years 1877–78 (Memoria correspondiente a la gestión 1877–1878), José Pedro Varela, the proponent of the Common Education Act (1877), notes the need to impose the “Castilian language” with the aim of fostering the national spirit and enabling full citizenship. The following excerpts illustrate his thinking in this sense.⁸

El idioma es el más poderoso vínculo de la nacionalidad; es por medio de él que se unifican las ideas, las aspiraciones y los sentimientos de las nacionalidades, en tanto que la diferencia de idioma entre los súbditos levanta una barrera casi insalvable para la constitución permanente de los estados. (folio 45, lines 1–5)⁹

⁸ The importance of such legislation has been highlighted by researchers in the field of language policy, at least by Barrios, Gabbiani, Behares, Elizaincín and Mazzolini (1993).

⁹ The text reproduced here was taken from the typescript transcription by historian Juan Pivel Devoto and was located in the archives by Cecilia Bértola, to whom we thank for having brought
Language is the most powerful bond of nationality; it is through language that the ideas, aspirations, and feelings of nationalities are connected, while the difference in language among a nation's subjects erects an almost insurmountable barrier against the permanent establishment of states.  

(Folio 45, lines 1–5)

According to Varela, such a barrier is mainly caused by the use of Portuguese. Thus, he points out:

La República Oriental [del Uruguay] tiene una grande amenaza y un gran peligro para el porvenir, en lo difundido que se hallaba el idioma brasilero en los Departamentos que son limítrofes del Imperio [Brasil]. No es solo que en esa importante zona de la República, una gran parte del suelo sea propiedad de ciudadanos brasileños: no es solo que estos se encuentren allí en gran número, es que por la natural influencia que ejercen en su riqueza y por el amor que profesan naturalmente al idioma nativo, los hijos de brasileños que nacen en la República solo hablan el idioma de sus padres, y comparten con ellos las ideas, las aspiraciones y los sentimientos.  

(fol. 46, lines 14–24).

The Eastern Republic [of Uruguay] faces a great threat and a great danger for the future posed by the extent to which the Brazilian language has spread in the Departments that limit with the Empire [of Brazil]. It is not just that in that important area of the Republic, much of the land is owned by Brazilian citizens; it is not just that they are there in great numbers; rather it is because of the natural influence they have due to their wealth and the love they naturally have for their mother tongue, that the sons and daughters of Brazilians who are born in the Republic only speak the language of their parents, and share their ideas, aspirations, and feelings.

(Folio 46, lines 14–24)

In response to those questioning the state’s right to impose on parents the language in which their children should be schooled, Varela argued that citizenship cannot be complete without knowledge of the language of the state:

La Constitución de la República establece que la ignorancia de la ley no exime de responsabilidad en los casos en que a ella se falte y para que esto no sea monstruoso, es necesario admitir que se parte del supuesto que todos los ciudadanos están en aptitud de conocer la que la ley manda – pero ¿cómo puede hacerse una suposición semejante, cuando se trata de ciudadanos que no conocen el idioma, es decir, el vehículo indispensable para la transmisión del pensamiento? Además, la ciudadanía impone cargas que no son renunciables: todo ciudadano tiene que servir en la guardia nacional, que ser jurado, etc. Ahora bien, ¿puede ser jurado el

que no conoce el idioma nacional? ¿Se puede cumplir con el servicio de la guardia nacional no conociendo el idioma pátrio?  (fol. 47, line 29 to fol. 48, line 9)\textsuperscript{11}

The Constitution of the Republic stipulates that ignorance of the law is no excuse for breaking it, and the only way this can be considered anything but outrageous is if we accept that it is based on the assumption that all citizens are capable of understanding what the law orders – but how is such an assumption possible in the case of citizens who do not know the language, that is, the indispensable vehicle for conveying thought? Also, citizenship imposes obligations that cannot be waived: all citizens must serve in the National Guard, they must be jurors, etc. Now then, can someone who does not speak the national language be on a jury? Can they serve in the National Guard if they do not know the language of the nation?

(Folio 47, line 29, to folio 48, line 9)

These ideas are reflected in a later communication addressed to the chiefs of police of the border departments (Maldonado, Cerro Largo, Tacuarembó, and Salto), which would later evolve into regulations enforced at the national level. On 20 October 1878, Interior Minister José M. Montero (II) issued a document stating that police chiefs had the obligation of ensuring that Spanish was taught in all private schools. The basis for this was very similar to what was expressed earlier by Varela (with whom Montero had collaborated closely). The document states as follows:

\begin{quote}
Es basado en los precedentes fundamentos que la Superioridad ordena a V. S. oblige á los maestros que se hallen en el caso precitado, á que den preferencia en la enseñanza al idioma castellano haciéndole saber al mismo tiempo que de lo contrario la autoridad procederá á clausurar sus establecimientos.
\end{quote}

(Fol. 38 línea 19–23)\textsuperscript{12}

Based on the stated grounds, the Superior Authority hereby instructs You to order teachers in situations such as the above to give preference to the Spanish language in their teaching, while informing them that if they fail to do so, their establishments will be closed down by the authorities.

This text was later turned into a national decree, signed by the head of the executive branch, Lorenzo Latorre, on 30 October 1878, and stating:

Art. 1\textsuperscript{a}. En todas las escuelas ó colegios de enseñanza elemental, superior y científica, se dará preferencia al idioma castellano, sin que esto importe excluir el estudio de los demás.

\textsuperscript{11}Archivo General de la Nación (Uruguay), Archivo Pivel Devoto, Box 53, Folder 136, Years 1878–1962.

\textsuperscript{12}Archivo General de la Nación (Uruguay), Archivo Pivel Devoto, Box 53, Folder 136, Years 1878–1962.
Art. 2º. La Dirección de Instrucción Pública reglamentará el presente Decreto cuidando que se hagan efectivas las disposiciones representativas contenidas en la citada circular. (fol. 49 lines 9–14)\textsuperscript{13}

Article 1. In all schools and institutes of elementary, higher, and scientific education, preference shall be given to the Spanish language, without this entailing the exclusion of the study of other languages. Article 2. The Board of Public Instruction shall regulate the present Decree, ensuring that the representative provisions contained in the aforesaid communication are effectively implemented. (Folio 49 lines 9–14)

The above decree, which went into effect on 20 January 1879, focused on the need for private schools to teach in Spanish, and thus we can infer that Spanish was already compulsory in public schools. The General Board of Public Instruction (Dirección General de Instrucción Pública) established that the enforcement of this decree would lie with the departmental school inspectors, who were to visit schools twice a year to verify compliance. Schools that failed to comply with the decree would incur increasingly higher fines and could be shut down if they continued to teach in a language other than Spanish.\textsuperscript{14}

This educational policy was supported by the country’s patrician class, its commercial bourgeoisie, and by the members of the Rural Association of Uruguay (Asociación Rural del Uruguay), who demanded nationwide education (see Bralich, 2011, pp. 49–51.) As St. Clair (1982) notes, such demands confirm the connection between certain socially-influential circles (such as these, who promoted the above regulations) and certain long-held attitudes toward specific languages. The political leaders of the young Uruguayan nation saw in the “Lusophone threat” in the northern region of the country an element that could negatively affect the prospects of success of the “one nation = one language” formula.\textsuperscript{15}

Outside the spheres of politics and education, we have no documents or accounts explicitly showing negative attitudes toward Portuguese. Nevertheless, the opinion of an author of the Criollismo literary movement, Benjamín Fernández y Medina, can be surmised through his judgment (highlight in bold below) of the word “quitandera”:

\textsuperscript{13} Archivo General de la Nación (Uruguay), Archivo Pivel Devoto, Box 53, Folder 136, Years 1878–1962.

\textsuperscript{14} Archivo General de la Nación (Uruguay), Archivo Pivel Devoto, Box 53, Folder 136, Years 1878–1962, f. 43 and 44.

\textsuperscript{15} Still, this was certainly not the country’s only language “problem” at the time. The many languages brought by European immigrants coming to Uruguay were also considered problematic and this became one more factor to push for education in Spanish.
As we have shown in this section, there have been neutral and negative attitudes in Uruguay toward the Portuguese language. When we focus on the border area, it seems clear that the negative attitudes became stronger as Spanish was imposed in the region. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that the neutral and negative attitudes did not follow one after another in time; rather they coexisted simultaneously at different levels of society.

**Discussion**

From our analysis we can conclude that in the nineteenth century there were two types of attitudes toward the Portuguese language: neutral attitudes and negative attitudes. The neutral attitudes were present throughout most of the nineteenth century, at the border area, where the presence of Portuguese was seen as natural both by locals and, apparently, by those groups that consented to the Luso-Brazilian invasion (1816–1828).

The negative attitudes were clearly developed in the south, originating in the capital, as the nation’s ruling classes, in their efforts to build the nation-state, faced the challenge posed by the presence of Portuguese in the north of the country. The opinions gleaned from our analysis of the two literary descriptive or evocative texts cited can also be considered negative attitudes toward the Portuguese language.

The use of archival documentation and the analysis of the press allowed us to confirm that Portuguese and Spanish coexisted in the public and private spheres throughout the nineteenth century in the Uruguay-Brazil border. Our present work strengthens the finding by Coll (2009) in the sense that neither of these two
languages seems to have been excluded from any specific sphere in the nineteenth century. At that time, texts could be written in Portuguese and Spanish both in a register as formal as that of the judiciary and in contexts as intimate as those of correspondence between relatives. This situation is connected with the fact that speaking and writing in Portuguese in the nineteenth century did not have, at the border, the stigma that began to be attached to it in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, after Spanish was imposed by Montevideo as the language used in education.

This absence of diglossia at the end of the nineteenth century is also telling of the “indifference” toward Portuguese or the absence of negative attitudes toward the language. The evolution toward bilingualism with diglossia, in the classical sense put forward by Fishman (1972), generated a scenario conducive to negative attitudes toward Portuguese. We have documented this from the perspective of Montevideo, but it has not been possible to document it at the border itself for the century studied.

Fostered by social actors in Montevideo, at the end of the nineteenth century the young Uruguayan nation developed negative attitudes toward the Portuguese language spoken at the border. These were channeled through the effort to establish Spanish as the nation’s sole language, which resulted in them spreading to speakers at the border region.

**Synthesis**

The study of attitudes toward Portuguese in nineteenth century Uruguay demanded that we begin by considering the issue of the methodology required to work with language attitudes from a diachronic perspective. We have proposed here some paths that can bring us closer to the study of attitudes in past synchronies. This in many cases entails determining attitudes by interpreting the presence, absence, or coexistence of Spanish and Portuguese in the pool of available documents. In other cases, it is necessary to interpret the content of explicit legislative or political discourses, or of value judgments expressed by some authors of the time, as we did with the lexicographic note that we commented on above. We have also resorted to examples of satire and comments embedded in literary works in order to interpret attitudes toward the Portuguese language.

Second, our research has allowed us to refine the diachronic approach that can explain the historic sociolinguistic situation of the northern region of Uruguay. This diachronic perspective will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the synchronic perspective regarding such a complex linguistic reality. This is especially relevant given the process currently underway, which reveals new attitudes furthered from
the Portuguese-speaking region by some of the very same Portuguese varieties formerly stigmatized.16

In summary, with respect to attitudes, we have seen two different scenarios unfolding throughout the nineteenth century: that of the Portuguese invasions (at the beginning of the century) and that of the border with Brazil. We have resorted, in the first scenario, to analyzing some literary pieces in order to investigate the attitudes present in creative works that reveal discomfort as a response to the contact between Spanish and Portuguese. In the second scenario, we have drawn on different types of resources, which enabled us to combine the analysis of the corpus of documents in Portuguese from the Uruguay-Brazil border in the nineteenth century with the analysis of press and of accounts by social actors of the time. This resulted in a triangulation process that has proved fruitful, given that it allowed us to record the attitudes toward the Portuguese language in the territory of Uruguay in the nineteenth century.

This chapter has thus fulfilled its two main goals: explicitly analyzing, for the first time, the attitudes toward Portuguese in the Uruguayan territory from a historic perspective and testing a methodology for the diachronic study of attitudes—based mainly on archival documents combined with legal and literary pieces.

References


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16. In an article dated 28 October 2015, Venancio Acosta describes a proposal from the Education and Culture Ministry of the border city of Rivera (department of Rivera) to have the Spanish-Portuguese variety portuñol declared Intangible Cultural Heritage of Uruguay: <http://www.revistaajena.com/la-primavera-del-bagazo/> (2 March, 2019).

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