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On the Borders and Bridges of Portuguese Programs (Including those with Spanish Programs)

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. . . stony limits cannot hold love out . . .
—Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2.67

The title of this feature is not at all accidental. It is my goal to share these thoughts not only with colleagues in my field, but also with colleagues in Spanish—the field closest to Portuguese and that other side of our linguistic, geographic, and political borders.

I do want to make a caveat, for the sake of honesty. Here, I will be expressing my viewpoints since most of my research agenda is focused on literary and cultural production, and not so much on program coordination and development. However, this caveat is neither feigned modesty nor a preliminary excuse for the plausible shortcomings of my message. Indeed, I chose this topic since a very large proportion of Portuguese instructors—often the "token" Portuguese instructor in our departments—juggle our research and teaching with all the efforts of program coordination, so as to make sure that a program is there to begin with. In the words of Margo Milleret (2016), "all Portuguese instruction in higher education in the United States, no matter where one teaches or how many classes one teaches, has at its core the important task of program development." Indeed, Milleret notes, "there is no final point to the job of program development. There are landmarks along the way, but those who teach Portuguese in the US are always program developers" (11).

With this in mind, my points of view stem from that very condition that is typical to most of us, Portuguese teachers and professors, which is the fact that we accumulate our teaching and research with program development. They also reflect my experiences both as a teacher of Portuguese for over twenty years now and as a professor of Portuguese as a foreign language in the United States for the last fifteen years, as well as a Portuguese program coordinator in two different institutions over the course of the last decade (University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee [UW–Milwaukee] and San Diego State University [SDSU]).

Before I go much further, though, I would like to address some of the data and conclusions that were released in June 2019 in the *Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Summer 2016 and Fall 2016: Final Report*, written by Dennis Looney and Natalia Lusin, and published by the Modern Language Association (MLA). The reason I am starting here is not to make us all feel disheartened, but rather to emphasize the point that we need to reinvent ourselves within the worlds of languages other than English and in Spanish and Portuguese. We should consider some of the excellent possibilities ahead of us—through creativity and innovation. According to the report, "Total enrollments (undergraduate and graduate) in languages other than English dropped by 9.2% between fall 2013 and fall 2016." On the other hand, "The total number of language programs offered in fall 2016 was

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down by [a staggering] 651, or 5.3%, since 2013, whereas between 2009 and 2013 the number of offered programs declined by one" (Looney and Lusin 2019, Summary page). Furthermore, "The 2013 MLA census showed overall enrollments falling by 6.7% . . . and . . . The 9.2% decline for fall 2016 clarifies" that the tendency of falling numbers continued (21).

The report highlights that Portuguese is part of the group of "languages [that] had close to half their programs reporting stable or increased enrollments: Portuguese (40.5%)" (Looney and Lusin 2019, Summary page). Not quite a case of a half-full or half-empty glass, undeniably this means that a considerable majority of our programs (59.5%) indeed reported a decrease in enrollments. And, as a matter of fact, in proportion, Portuguese sustained the blow better than Spanish, since 63.7% of Spanish programs actually reported a reduction in numbers (86).

According to the report, Fall 2016 marked the first time in decades that Portuguese enrollments lowered, taking us back to the numbers in the early 2000s. At the graduate level, between 2013 and 2016, 49% of Portuguese programs reported a decrease in enrollments. And, as per the report, Portuguese saw a decline of 30.2% in graduate enrollments, or a decrease of close to a third (8). At the introductory undergraduate level, 61.1% of Portuguese programs indicated a decrease in enrollments between 2013 and 2016, and the actual decrease in enrollments was of 22% (87). At the advanced undergraduate level, 50% of Portuguese programs indicated a decrease in enrollments, and the actual change was of 14.9% (88). Overall, fewer institutions and fewer degrees were granted. Whereas, in 2013, Portuguese in US higher education had 12,407 students, in 2016 we had 9,827 students, which means a decrease of 20.8%, or a fifth of our students (32).

Although the numbers in and of themselves are cause for concern, I can't help but wonder if the worst might yet be to come, if we consider that, since 2016, Brazil continued a deep economic recession (started in 2015), which may imply a decrease in students. In addition, the sizeable growth in urban violence is already leading schools to consider freezing exchange programs. And I am not even considering here what effect the presidency of Jair Bolsonaro may have in terms of student interest in studying Portuguese and in studying in Brazil. The recent growth of interest in Portugal, post the 2011/2015 financial crisis, both in terms of tourism and an increase of study abroad programs, may help balance the impact of the reduction of students going to Brazil, if indeed they are discouraged by any or all of the factors referred above.

We are, thus, a bit farther from the optimism of studies just from just a few years ago, which took into consideration a number of facts such as a trend of growth in the number of students, a palpable international excitement about Brazil, and certainly a bigger openness in the United States regarding other cultures and languages than today. That openness to world languages and cultures may or may not be receding, but if we were to judge by the discourse of the political leadership, certainly it would seem to be the case that it is dwindling. And today we are even more aware of the crisis in the Humanities, the implications of the neo-liberal university model, and that the stimulus to graduate faster—at first glance, highly commendable—can be detrimental to languages that are not frequently taught in community colleges and high schools.

But, again, I am not mentioning these numbers from the MLA report to make as all feel despondent with the *status quo*, despite the serious hard work that we all do on a daily basis. Rather, I seek to highlight strongly that we need changes, and to note that some are low-hanging fruit, if we apply our desire to build bridges. Whereas I do not have a magic wand, I do believe the Portuguese language and Luso-Afro-Brazilian studies programs often come across what are perceived as borders that seem too difficult to cross, frequently associated with zero-sum perspectives, which do not have to be the case.

I am not referring here about the multiple hurdles that we need to jump over so as to promote Portuguese on a regular basis, such as ensuring quality of teaching and research, promoting our classes, reaching out to different campus units such as language acquisition centers, centers for Latin American Studies/European Studies/African Studies, reaching out to the business schools, creating new courses to work with these campus units and in interaction with other degrees, teaching a wide variety of topics, reaching out to the communities of Portuguese speakers in

town, surveying students about potential new programs, etc.[1] All of those practices, no matter the work they require, are predictably successful and impact our programs positively.

What I do want to address here are a few borders that we perceive as too unmovable, both within the field of Portuguese, and between Portuguese and Spanish, since these are limitations in which we often get stuck unnecessarily. Before I do so, I wanted to remember that, if there is anything positive in our current "build-the-wall" *zeitgeist*, it is the fact that it reminds us that our profession is by nature so utterly contrary to that spirit. Indeed, all language teachers know empirically that "stony limits cannot hold love out," to quote, in a different context, Romeo's declaration to Juliet, in Shakespeare's play (*Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2.67). This happens because teaching languages and cultures, by definition, means helping students see the world through the eyes of other people, try differences, and reinvent themselves in other latitudes, most often even without leaving the country. And we relish in the fact that we are able to help our students open up to the world via language. Adopting that same philosophy to our programs can only help us grow. Indeed, the most reactionary of language instructor, to his/her chagrin, will always be working against a chauvinist agenda by bringing individuals closer to the difference that s/he may abhor. Fortunately, this is certainly not the case of the overwhelming majority of language instructors, who are dedicated to embracing difference and diversity and are aware of the role their job performs towards that goal. Adopting the same kind of philosophical approach—openness to difference—to our own disciplines and programs can only help us grow.

The Benefits of a Plurinational Approach

One of the situations across which Portuguese programs often come is related to programmatic divisions—and perhaps even some divisionism—at the level of language teaching. In my opinion, these are separations too closely aligned with the limits of national borders. Moreover, this is a peculiarity of Portuguese programs, not found so strikingly in other languages, such as Spanish, French, or even English. Usually, in none of these last three languages is the variant to be taught indicated in the course titles in the catalogs. The same is to say that usually these programs do not include in the titles of their language courses the indication that they teach the French of Québec or France, the Spanish from Argentina, Mexico or Spain, nor do they even indicate whether they teach British or American English. Certainly, as far as English is concerned, the fact that we are in the United States is not insignificant, as this leads to the assumption that North American English will be the variant taught. But the truth is that, in ESL, we easily find teachers from multiple regions of the world, with different accents and distinct patterns, who teach a standardized academic English, less focused on the specific variants or on the individual accent of the specific teachers. In the Spanish case, a loosely standardized academic variant is also taught, seeking to emphasize linguistic diversity, but focusing on elements that help students succeed in any Spanish-language context.

Portuguese is somewhat unique. Our language programs either simply list "Portuguese" as the language taught, or choose to specify "Brazilian Portuguese." Although they may exist, I know of no course identified specifically as "European Portuguese" currently taught at the college level, though of course the name is still used in smaller settings such as tutoring centers, or community schools.

If, decades ago, the—quite frankly, prejudiced—premise that could be inferred in our universities was that European Portuguese was the prestigious Portuguese to be taught, today things have changed substantially. Currently it is not so much that we openly say that the most prestigious Portuguese to be learned is *carioca* (i.e, from Rio de Janeiro) or the one spoken in the Rio de Janeiro/São Paulo axis (and not even the Northeastern or Gaúcho, although that is often implied). It is rather that Portuguese programs often specify in the titles of language courses they will teach one variant, because in fact they do not want to deal with the others, be it because they do not feel prepared to do so, or simply because they don't think there is any relevance to it.

I want to be clear about this, and I would hope I will not be misunderstood. I am not saying that the Portuguese spoken in Portugal and the Portuguese spoken in Brazil or Angola or Mozambique are the same, nor that we should state anything of the sort to students. It would be tremendously absurd. Evidently there are differences between spoken and written Portuguese in Portugal and in Brazil, and we should indeed recognize those differences in our teaching practice. Furthermore, if we want to discuss the issue of diversity of language patterns, then we should also recognize that there are huge accent, lexical and syntactic differences among the speakers of each of these countries.

Indeed, as far as pronunciation is concerned, the variety within the boundaries of Brazil is unequivocal. A speaker from the city of João Pessoa, for example, pronounces *liberda**di***, unlike the *liberda**dji*** that is routinely taught to language learners as the "correct" Brazilian standard. As for syntax, still in Brazil, a *gaúcho*, a native of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, often uses the pronoun "tu" (almost always with the third-person verb form, although this is highly chastised). However, our elementary-level textbooks most often state that this pronominal form "tu" is used in informal discourse only in Portugal, and not in Brazil, where, according to the same books, only "você" is used in such a context. I would say we see two kinds of attitude in the refusal of "tu" as a part of Brazilian Portuguese when teaching personal pronouns. It is not only a question of disregarding the discursive forms of *gaúchos*, because they are a minority; it is also somewhat a classist perspective. If we watch *Cidade de Deus*, the biggest international hit of Brazilian cinema and a film that takes place in Rio de Janeiro, and one that our students often watch even before they come to our classes, we will hear that the same pronoun "tu," with the same syntax engaged in Rio Grande do Sul ("tu vai"/"tu faz"), is used constantly in the speech of the most disenfranchised portrayed on the screen. And the fact that it is used in this less educated segment is another reason why it is typically not even referred in our textbooks.

Still regarding diversity, if we cross the Atlantic Ocean and think about Portugal, a country with much smaller proportions and with a twentieth of Brazil's population, we still see great lexical and accent variety. The so-called European Portuguese includes the accents of the North of the country, with its open vowels, and vv (*vês*) and bb (*bês*) so close to each other that the former often become *bês*. It is a profoundly different accent, for example, from the *Alentejano* one, and it is also highly chastised for characteristics that, ironically, are standardized in Spanish and in the neighboring Galicia, such as that almost identical pronunciation of *v* and *b*.

By the same token, do we even consider the accent diversities of the Azores islands to be an integral part of this concept of European Portuguese? With a population of around 250,000 people, the nine islands, divided into three groups, are as far apart as continental Portugal's length, and they have a significant diversity of pronunciations. What is mistakenly known as a so-called Azorean accent, stereotypically vilified as incomprehensible, is the specific accent of the largest and most populated island, São Miguel, the Micaelense, which is frankly distinct from the accents on the other islands, whose pronunciations are closer to those in the mainland. Thus, even when we speak of European Portuguese, the designation somehow continues to gloss over the existing diversity.

What about the Portuguese spoken in the so-called *Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa* (PALOP)? What place do they occupy vis-a-vis the most often-repeated variants? In the usual division between European and Brazilian Portuguese, where does the Portuguese spoken by tens of millions of Africans from the various PALOP countries fit? To what extent is the customary notion that European Portuguese is spoken in these countries true? Whereas the pronunciation of consonants mostly resembles that of Portugal, the lexical diversity indicates that, naturally, something else is taking place.

What I openly question is both the rationale and the usefulness, from the point of view of program development, of including the designation of specific variants in the titles of the Portuguese language courses, in universities and schools that, by definition, should aim to reach

the greatest number and greatest diversity of students possible, and not so much a smaller core of students, as would be the case in a tutoring center or individual or personalized classes.

I am not putting forth any derivation of linguistic neocolonialism, or a hypothetical linguistic version of Lusotropicalism, which in any way could *lusitanize* the African or the Brazilian, or *Brazilianize* the Portuguese, erasing differences and assimilating all variants. Quite the contrary, it is a matter of officially recognizing that, irrespective of the variant spoken by the instructor, the Portuguese language is a rich set of variants. And that this is a diversity with which students most often *do* want to contact.

Specifically, what I reject is the desire to divide and conquer, somewhat artificially, what cannot so easily be divided, following national boundaries and ignoring the very diversity within these spaces . . . often for nationalistic reasons, or to "defend" our turf, or because we might not be acquainted with the other variants.

What I support, therefore, is an unequivocal call for the simple designation of *Portuguese* to be used in our language courses, regardless of the nationality or accent of those who teach them, and that such a designation may reflect a truly plurinational approach, that puts students in touch with a variety of discourses from different regions, through video and audio samples. Regarding this topic, a study in 2012 suggested that one of the reasons for the growth of the Portuguese programs in the USA, at the time, was the creation of new textbooks, including *Ponto de encontro*, which lists side by side different variants; possibly it was not only that the book had a better pedagogic approach, but also that it showed students a diversity of variants, thus enriching the process (Milleret 2012: 140).

The simplicity and openness I advocate, of course, allows instructors to speak the variant that they know best, in absolute freedom. And it has the advantage of avoiding mindboggling situations, such as new instructors being required by their older peers to speak a specific variant and to adopt an accent that is not theirs, because that's how their peers set up the program years before. For the colleagues in Spanish, a comparison would be to force an instructor who is a speaker of the Mexican variant to teach using the Castilian 'z,' because someone says that students really just want to go to Madrid and Barcelona for their study abroad programs, regardless of whether that is even true. This is nothing that we have not seen already, but it is something that continues to not make sense. In the very least, I would hope we could prevent instructors from "polishing" (irony intended) their beautifully diverse accents and eliminating the richness of their lexical diversity just so that they speak more closely to prestigious models.

I would also add two ideas regarding the benefits of a plurinational approach, which my teaching of Portuguese in the last fifteen years here in the Unites States has showed me. The first is that, when students are immersed in a context in which they hear various accents and variants, they in fact still learn the variant they want to learn, over time, regardless of the teacher they have at a given moment. This is because they try to be in touch with this variant in several distinct contexts. At SDSU, particularly, students sometimes volunteer their appreciation for having worked with teachers from Brazil, Portugal and the United States—which, curiously, often prepares them to understand different variants to a point that native speakers of a given one sometimes cannot.

The second idea is that even students who are highly motivated to visit a specific country during their study abroad programs, sooner or later, end up visiting other Portuguese-speaking nations. Notably, in order to debunk myths and stereotypes, and certainly not to reinforce them, I often joke with students identifying the real reason why they want to learn Portuguese: that is, because they already have a Brazilian boy/girlfriend, or because they want to have one. But truly I know our serious commitment to help students attain a superior level of Portuguese. And those students who develop a professional proficiency in the language, sooner or later, want to know more than one country; in fact, some of my former students have already lived and worked in not one but three different Portuguese-speaking countries, namely Brazil, Mozambique, and

Portugal. Students in Department of Defense-sponsored programs, already in the military career, sometimes are familiarizing themselves further with European or Brazilian Portuguese . . . after already having been sent to African nations with Portuguese as an official language.

Two years after graduating, and with the first college bills starting to get paid, as they work in a reasonable but not yet perfect job, students write to me asking for information regarding other Portuguese-speaking countries they did not visit during their studies.

Going back to the title of the presentation, what I propose is that we stop the divide-and-conquer approach, since it usually means that we all lose. Instead of valuing too much the differences so as to reject what is different as overly extravagant or exotic, we certainly need to point out the richness of such differences in order not to exclude them. Instead of getting stuck on the borders we say we want to abolish, we should build bridges, and make an effort not to crystallize our ignorance of the other—something that is not always very easy.

The Border between Spanish and Portuguese Programs

Finally, we should speak in very practical terms of this greatest of borders in our departments, which is the one separating the two languages in AATSP, a sort of continuation of the geographical borders between the Portuguese and the Spanish-speaking countries in the Iberian Peninsula and in Latin America.

The joke goes that those who believe that literature makes better people have never been present in a faculty meeting of a department of language and literature. This statement alludes to a certain lack of collegiality that sometimes is part of the lives of departments, and that is part of our profession. And the relations between Spanish and Portuguese, as experienced by those who teach these languages, all too often are not far from the reality alluded to by this joke. In a way, this border, which is essentially territorial, is the largest one separating Spanish and Portuguese, rather than a linguistic or cultural one.

When, decades ago, the writer Jorge de Sena was asked by a Portuguese journalist what it was like to teach in a Department of Spanish and Portuguese in California (at the University of California, Santa Barbara), and in fact to chair this department, and also what the usual interaction between these two languages at American universities was like, he replied symptomatically that it was better to sleep with the enemy than to spend the night in the open air. I read this interview more than a decade ago when I researched Sena's archives, and while I cannot find the text anymore, the phrase and the image stuck with me. I would like to claim that this was only due to the disconcerting humor implied, but I believe it was also because, when watching our academic circles, sometimes one cannot help but recognize that such perspectives continue to exist.

However, there is really no point in listing here the divisions that we all know exist in some departments, almost always around nationalities or even continents, and adopting a wide range of combinations, according to the best political strategies of the moment.

On the contrary, I will start by recognizing the support between these two languages, and say that the cohabitation of Portuguese with Spanish historically has been a safeguard for Portuguese in times of crisis, with the numbers of Spanish students (even when in decline) balancing the budgets when Portuguese enrollment also declines. On the other hand, we should wonder why it is that the only two Portuguese programs that live in an autonomous department (Brown University and University of Massachusetts–Dartmouth) have managed to grow in terms of the number of professors, reaching a comfortable size, to the point that they have become central for Portuguese and Luso-Afro-Brazilian studies in the United States, whereas the programs integrated in Departments of Spanish and Portuguese somehow have more limited growth in terms of faculty, when they are able to grow at all in terms of that specific indicator.

The point is that it is not so much a question of sleeping with the enemy, as described by Jorge de Sena, but of sleeping with a giant in a small bed. This is because, as the 2016 MLA report says, "Spanish is in a category all its own . . . Spanish enrollments are still greater than all other

language enrollments combined" (Looney and Lusin 2019: 6). Indeed, Spanish programs will always have pressing needs, which, because they affect the academic life of hundreds or thousands of students every semester, become very urgent, often allowing for Portuguese to be reduced to its minimum. It is a vicious circle that colleagues who do not teach Portuguese sometimes are not even aware of: if the beginner classes themselves are restricted to the bare minimum (often one section), it becomes impossible to have students at the advanced levels, and thus we reaffirm the image of a language with little academic weight; the idea that it is a loss of resources to bet on Portuguese courses becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Anecdotes abound of institutions that experiment once with a new course or two sections of the same course, and if these do not fill immediately, simply do not try again.

Let us remember that Portuguese is the fifth most-spoken language in the world, with about 260 million speakers (and growing to an expected 400 million by 2050), the third most-spoken in the West, the most widely spoken in the Southern Hemisphere, an official language in 9 countries and other regions; it is present in Europe, South America, Africa, and parts of Asia (see Reto et al. 2016, 56–57). It is present in the United States, in sizeable communities, and in some regions quite evidently, due to the different waves of immigration. Portuguese is more commonly spoken in United States households than Japanese, for example.[2] The truth is that all of us in the field of Portuguese know that if you promote the language, the students inevitably appear, within certain limits.

Returning to the issue of borders, there is no doubt that Spanish and Portuguese are the closest of the Romance languages of a national scale. At the same time, the history and the contemporary life of Hispanic and Lusophone societies bring these two societies together uniquely—even in their conflicts. How can we not take advantage of this linguistic proximity and these historical and social affinities, when we try to develop our Spanish and Portuguese programs, both seeking to offset enrollment losses and as we try to innovate?

I would like to share seven specific suggestions regarding ways to bring the two languages together in our departments of Spanish and Portuguese:

1. Incentivize Bilinguals to Become Polyglots

Let us teach Spanish students about the advantages—personal, professional—of adding to their proficiency in the two most widely spoken languages in the West (English and Spanish) the third most-spoken language. A language in which they can get a very comfortable proficiency in very few semesters. We can consider a border region, such as San Diego, where I teach, to refer both clear advantages and challenges in this regard (the same ones are found in all Hispanic-serving Institutions, as it happens). On the one hand, the number of Spanish speakers is very large, and the numbers of Spanish students are naturally high, which will lead us to believe, correctly, that these students are good "targets" for recruiting learners of Portuguese. However, many of the Spanish students in the region have never in fact learned a language that is truly foreign to them, since they grew up immersed in English and Spanish. Indeed not only can the process of learning a foreign language scare such students, but often a negative self-image regarding their proficiency in Spanish (or English, for that matter) leads them to think that they will never learn another language until they "speak Spanish well" or until they know where the Spanish diacritics should be placed correctly.

It is important to remind heritage students that they do not need to have a superior proficiency in oral and written Spanish language before they can start learning another Romance language; and that learning another Romance language can in fact help them become better language students altogether. This kind of leadership is another way to assist the Hispanic community in asserting itself socially, and we should not neglect it.

I could share a story regarding this: every time I visit advanced Spanish language and culture courses to promote Portuguese classes, I ask students what languages they speak and what

languages their parents speak. I would say that, in 95% of the cases, I am told that both groups, parents and students, speak "only" Spanish and English. It becomes easy, at that point, to explain that in regions where bilinguals abound, the addition of a third language can help students stand out from those around them and, moreover, clearly help them make a difference from their family experience. All these students know that it is important to cure the disease of monolingualism—they have already felt its symptoms in their skin and in their parents' skin—and then they also realize that we can add to bilingualism. In other words, it is worth learning languages not only to feel secure in the bilingual world one inhabits and know it better, but to greatly expand our horizons. So, cure monolingualism; add to bilingualism.

2. Create Courses that Bring Together Portuguese and Spanish Speakers and Students

Another strategy is the creation of courses of Portuguese for Speakers of Spanish—a curriculum area that has contributed solidly to the growth of Portuguese in the last decades.[3] And, other courses should be created that take advantage of the affinities between the two languages: broad romance linguistics classes, for example; courses with a comparative approach on the colonial or postcolonial periods in the Hispanic and Lusophone worlds, among others.

3. Offer the Possibility to Obtain a Second Credential for Portuguese

We should also explain to M.A. students in Spanish who intend to be school teachers that, by developing Portuguese proficiency, down the road they can obtain a second credential to teach Portuguese with relative ease, and that this will make them stand out when applying for jobs in schools. Why not remind this to teachers already in schools, since it is easier for a school to consider offering its students a Portuguese course when a teacher already working there has or obtains this credential, than hiring someone new to teach only Portuguese?

4. Create Study Abroad Programs that Visit both Spanish and Portuguese-speaking Countries

Let us offer study abroad programs that cross borders and have a transnational focus (Spanish and Portuguese). These could have an Iberian focus, or a Latin American one. And if you teach a course in Lisbon and Madrid, there is certainly space to discuss the multicultural dimension of these regions, with immigrants from several countries that speak Spanish or Portuguese. In such courses, it is hoped that students will get to know quite a bit more about both societies, and address affinities and differences between them. Students may also contrast these realities with their own country; consider, for example, contrasting bilingualism in Galicia or Catalonia with the reality at the United States Southwest border.

5. Consider Hiring More Multilingual Faculty

When hiring instructors—key moments in the lives of departments—as far as possible we should consider the advantages of finding individuals who can advance both the Portuguese and the Spanish programs, and not necessarily just one of them. Think of researchers and teachers who have in some way studied subjects related to both linguistic spaces. Indeed, it is all too easy to defend many types of transnational studies, in our research, but then ignore candidates who value these areas in their research or dissertations, in the job market. This does not mean that departments cannot choose someone who does not check this condition and only speaks one of the languages—it would be silly to do so if s/he is the best candidate for a specific need. But

departments should give a second thought to the possibility of hiring with the aim of creating an innovative transnational/cross-linguistic curriculum.

6. Let your Curriculum Illustrate the Goal of Fostering Multilingualism

Consider the possibility of counting a course (or courses) taught in the other language of the department, whether of language or culture, towards the requirements of the degrees in Spanish or Portuguese. This would support the explicit desire to create true trilingual professionals in the Departments.

7. Create Joint Degrees

Take into consideration the possibility of creating a BA in the two languages—Spanish and Portuguese—in line with some degrees already offered in the United States. As a rule, it will be more feasible to define as entry levels advanced Spanish and intermediate Portuguese. Don't get stuck in the uneven entry levels, since different languages have different expectations and sets of requirements, and we can't compare the presence of Spanish in high schools and community colleges with that of Portuguese.

Conclusion

I present here just a few practical suggestions—though not necessarily easy ones to put in practice—specifically about the border between our Spanish and Portuguese programs, a boundary that oftentimes is either unnecessarily reinforced or just neglected into oblivion, eventually turning into an unsurpassable wall.

By way of conclusion, though, I would like to say that the central argument of this presentation is, in short, a defense of approaches that bring together what is often only artificially separated because of the boundaries of our institutions, or what can be bridged in a creative manner, with the goal of generating novelty.

With regard to some divisions in Portuguese programs, surely the time has come for us to embrace the diversity of our variants and the potential that the teaching of this variety brings. In a few decades Lusophone Africa will represent an even more substantial part of Portuguese speakers in the world; we must stop throwing the baby out with the bathwater and accept Portuguese as the multifaceted language that it is, recognizing that our students gain by knowing more of its multiple sides.

As for the proposals to create more bridges between the Spanish and Portuguese programs, I do not pretend they are easily feasible, nor that the Portuguese program I direct is the alpha and omega of this account. Not all of these suggestions are applicable everywhere, and in my work, I have been able to implement some of them. But even having put into practice only some, in these few years, I can see that, by contrast with the national context, in which almost 60% of Portuguese programs report a loss in their numbers of students, the program I currently direct grew in several indicators and remained stable in others.

We can look at this national phase we are going through by choosing to focus on the writing on the wall: Spanish and Portuguese programs declined between 2013 and 2016; since then we have the "America first" discourse, that ghost of policies past, which for many means an "English only" policy, the Brazilian economic crisis, the indicators of violence in Brazil pre- and post-Bolsonaro, among other elements that might have a negative impact the teaching of Portuguese. Considering this perspective, we can ask what the departments of Spanish and Portuguese stand to lose with the creation of alternatives such as the ones I suggested, to attract and/or retain new students.

However, I would rather call your attention to the much more positive side of this discussion, which is the only one that can lead us to an inspired action. Over the last ten years, as a teacher and coordinator of Portuguese, and as someone looking to bring together the students of Spanish and Portuguese, on a daily basis, I have literally come across hundreds of Spanish-speaking students with an enormous desire to learn Portuguese, expand their horizons, and increase their career opportunities. Students who I followed from their beginner level to the most advanced levels of language and literature, or those who added Portuguese to their worldviews during their graduate studies. Many of them found excellent jobs because they stood out from their peers given their proficiency in Portuguese; others were accepted into Ph.D. programs in Spanish and Portuguese departments, where their general preparation in *both* our languages was appreciated. Sometimes they developed their research in a comparative way in graduate school or afterwards. All of them have always expressed how fortunate they feel to have been able to add Portuguese to their Spanish curriculum, reinventing themselves on this other side of the mirror that is our language, and creating new bridges for the newness in their lives they started to cherish. It is for them and for all those who want to learn something new, beyond the limits of their own language, that it is worth creating more opportunities for Spanish and Portuguese to be developed. Side by side.

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NOTES

[1] See Bezerra et al.'s "Marketing Your Program/On-Campus Opportunities" (2016), for a thorough presentation of multiples initiatives that Portuguese program coordinators could—and indeed need to—take up so as to have their programs be successful. The study covers a wide range of suggestions, and focuses "on the following topics: (a) advertising your classes, (b) organizing and promoting events, (c) surveying students and collecting data, (d) starting and mentoring a Portuguese club, (e) identifying partners inside and outside your department and institution, (f) developing a website and managing an identity via social media, (g) using study abroad as a marketing tool, and (h) conveying to colleagues and administrators the value of increasing the visibility of your program" (64). Although not listed in this synthesis, the study also provides very good recommendations regarding documenting the work implied in the activity of program development, since this is often not easily understood by colleagues who do not have this kind of professional task, and certainly not by tenure committees.

[2] See the American Community Survey Reports publication titled *Language Use in the United States: 2011* compiled by Camille Ryan (2016: 3–7). According to the report, the population of speakers of Portuguese in United States homes in 2011 was 673,566, and this is a growth of 95,6% from the total of 351,875 in 1980.

[3] The scholarship on Portuguese for Spanish speakers, or on Portuguese as a third language, has grown significantly. I would recommend the studies by Bateman (2016), and by Carvalho et al. (2010).

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