

The historical struggle over control of the Portuguese language

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Portugal has been going through a rough patch. Its international stature has diminished over the years, its economy has always struggled to remain competitive, the government had to accept a bailout to avoid defaulting on its debt, and on top of it all, it is losing control of its own language. In Portugal, the latest round of Portuguese spelling reform takes effect over a six-year transition period, leaving the Portuguese dismayed that the spelling of their language is being driven by Brazil, a former colony. I sympathize with the plight of the Portuguese, although I also understand the value of consistent spelling. (The rules for the English language are established not by any central authority but rather are determined by convention.) I wonder if the U.K. feels the same way about its former colony.

Bonus chatter: The Microsoft Language Portal Blog reports that Microsoft intends to phase in the spelling reform over a four-year period for Brazil-localized products. A quick glance at the Microsoft style guide for Portuguese (Portugal) says that the spelling reform has yet to take effect among the Portugal-localized version of Microsoft products.

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