The Lusophone World in French Political and Internet Discourse

**Keywords:** Lusophony, French language, political discourse, internet discourse, corpus linguistics

The paper aimed to examine the terms related to the concept of Lusophony in the French political and internet discourse to better understand the role of the Lusophone world in French-speaking society. We conducted a grammatical and contextual analysis of the words *Portugal*, *Brésil*, and *lusophonie* (and their adjectives) as they are used in the Europarl corpus and the FrTenTen corpora. The results show interesting differences between the two discourse genres. In political discourse, the examined words are related mostly to discussions about the economy, environmental issues, and food exports. On the other hand, in online discourse the analysed terms are most frequently applied to the topic of football, but also to discussions about colonization and beauty treatments (like Brazilian hair straightening). Utilizing the analysis presented in this study we could not detect the topic of culture, which is an unexpected result with regard to the global importance that Lusophone culture has in the field of music (e.g. fado and bossa nova), dance (e.g. samba and capoeira), and literature (e.g. Fernando Pessoa and José Saramago).

1 Introduction

The concept of Lusophony opens an interdisciplinary research field focusing on different diachronic (Cahen, 2013) and synchronic aspects (Fernandes, 2018) of the Portuguese-speaking world. With approximately 230 million native speakers, Lusophony covers an interesting set of cultural identities,
regions, communities, and countries related to the use of Portuguese, such as Portugal, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, and so on.

In France, the topic of Lusophone studies is important for two reasons: the first is the close political cooperation between France and the main Portuguese-speaking countries (Portugal and Brazil), and the second is a strong Lusophone community of around one million people living in France. The majority of these Portuguese-speaking people live in the Parisian outskirts, but also in other regions such as Corse or Normandy. Portuguese immigration in France took place mainly during the 1960s and 1970s, when many people wanted to escape António de Oliveira Salazar’s dictatorship. Another reason for migrations toward France was the economic stagnation of Brazil, a traditional destination for the Portuguese, and the measures taken by France to attract Portuguese workers.

The analysis aims to examine the linguistic characteristics of the main terms representing the concept of Lusophony in political and online discourse to detect linguistic patterns that intuition alone cannot perceive, and to achieve a deeper understanding of the dimensions of the Lusophone world in French-speaking society. The study was conducted as part of the welcome for the new study programme, Portuguese language and culture, at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana.

2 Methodology

We present a grammatical and contextual analysis of the words Portugal, Brésil, and Lusophonie (and their adjectives) used in French parliamentary and internet discourse. The analysis was systematically carried out at the level of the relations that the selected words have with their most frequent collocations (e.g. Portuguese presidency) and at the level of the discourse value of these words within their authentic context (e.g. The Portuguese and Slovenian presidencies must prepare intensively for what we are doing).

2.1 Corpus

To examine how the concept of Lusophony operates in French online and parliamentary discourse, we have chosen the corpus approach. This approach provides empirical results that can be interpreted at both quantitative and qualitative levels, but it first requires drawing up a list of terms that most objectively represent the core concept of our study – Lusophony.
The first step was to select the corpus for our analysis. We decided to benefit from the existing corpora that include parliamentary and everyday online discourse: the Europarl corpus (Koehn, 2005) and the FrTenTen Corpus (Baroni et al., 2009).

The Europarl corpus brings together the deliberations of the European Parliament produced between 2007 and 2011 and translated into 21 European languages. The French section of the corpus contains more than 66 million occurrences or around two million sentences. The texts were automatically processed with the TreeTagger tool (Schmid, 1994), which enables queries to be made at the level of lemmas and parts of speech.

The FrTenTen corpus is a French corpus compiled from texts collected on the internet. It belongs to the TenTen corpus family which includes more than 30 languages. The corpus currently contains 5.7 billion words and includes many varieties of the French language – European, Canadian, and African French. It has been annotated with the FreeLing tool (Padró et al., 2012).

We analysed the selected corpora with the SketchEngine search tool (Kilgarriff et al., 2014), which allows us to study a chosen word at the levels of frequency, collocations, and their most frequent contexts. This enables us to establish new hypotheses about the meaning and the impact of the examined linguistic structures in different communication situations.

### 2.2 Analytic procedure

After choosing the corpora for the analysis, we selected the relevant terms and the analytic procedure. For the selection of terms, we consulted the texts Préhistoire de la lusophonie (Rozeaux, 2019) and Histoire du Portugal et de son empire colonial (Oliveira Marques, 1998). We chose to focus our analysis on the following terms: Portugal, portugais, Brésil, brésilien, Lusophonie, and lusophone.¹ The pair Portugal and portugais was chosen because it represents the country which is at the origin of Lusophony, the pair Brésil and brésilien because it concerns the largest Lusophone community, and the pair lusophonie and lusophone because it denotes explicitly the targeted object of our analysis. The research aimed to perform a linguistic analysis of the chosen terms as they are authentically used in French political and online discourse to provide new insights into the dimensions and challenges of the contemporary Lusophone world.

¹ On the semantic level, the terms lusophonie and lusophone are not completely analogous – the noun lusophonie refers to a political-diplomatic concept, while the adjective lusophone refers to communities of speakers of the Portuguese language.
We analysed each of the selected terms from a grammatical and contextual point of view. To observe the grammatical behaviour of the terms, we generated their lexical profile using the Word Sketch function. This function gathers information from thousands of examples and provides their collocations, defined as words frequently used with the term in question (e.g. annual inflation). The result is a measure organized into categories following their grammatical relations between the word in question and its surrounding words (e.g. adjective: accelerating inflation, verb – to bring inflation under control, and noun: inflation rate). Figure (1) reveals the lexical profile of the word Portugal in parliamentary discourse.

![Figure 1. Portugal: lexical profile in the Europarl corpus.](image)

Figure 1 shows that the word Portugal is often used as a subject in structures like Le Portugal a enregistré and le Portugal connaît (Portugal is experiencing) and also object in structures like ravager le Portugal (to ravage Portugal), dévaster le Portugal (to devastate Portugal), and exempter le Portugal (to exempt Portugal).

Once the lexical profiles of the selected terms had been drawn up, we analysed the context in which the words with their typical collocations were used. To do this we used the concordance function, which shows the authentic context where the examined words were used.
Picture (1) shows the concordances for the structure *Portugal enregistre* (*Portugal records*) in the Europarl corpus.

As shown in Picture (1), the syntagm *le Portugal enregistre* is used in the context of the economic activity which is measured by the gross domestic product (in French *produit intérieur brut* (PIB), as shown by example (1):

(1) *Or, comme vous le savez, le Portugal enregistre l’un des niveaux de PIB par habitant les plus bas de l’Union européenne.*

(However, as you know, Portugal has one of the lowest levels of GDP per capita in the European Union.)

The syntagm *le Portugal connaît*, on the other hand, is used especially in the context of negative phenomena, such as drought, as shown in example (2):

(2) *Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Commissaire, Mesdames et Messieurs, le Portugal connaît une épouvantable sécheresse impliquant des pertes de récoltes, des décès d’animaux.*

(Mr. President, Commissioner, ladies, and gentlemen, Portugal is experiencing a terrible drought involving loss of crops and death of animals.)

If we move to examples where Portugal functions as the grammatical object, Figure (1) shows that the predominant structure is *ravager le Portugal*. Picture (2) shows the concordances for this structure in the Europarl corpus.

Picture 2. Concordances of the structure *ravager le Portugal*.
Picture (2) shows that the structure *ravager le Portugal* is used in political discourse, especially in the context of forest fires (example 3):

(3) *Monsieur le Président, les graves incendies de forêts qui ont ravagé le Portugal cette année ont également touché des zones agricoles et urbaines.*

The structure *exempter le Portugal* is used especially when speaking about EU financial assistance regarding the Portugal’s difficult economic situation (example 4):

(4) *La décision d’exempter le Portugal de l’exigence de co-financement pour un montant de 320 millions d’euros est une décision raisonnable.*  

(*The decision to exempt Portugal from the co-financing requirement for an amount of 320 million euros is a reasonable decision.*)

Once the lexical profiles were produced and the concordances analysed, we examined the results concerning the chosen words in the Europarl and FrTenTen corpora. The objective of this analysis was to explore if there are, for each of the two discourse genres, specifics at the linguistic level that could help to interpret the status and challenges of Lusophony in French political and everyday discourse.

3 Analysis and results

After gathering the information regarding the lexical profile and contextual value of the observed terms, we were able to proceed to their analysis.

3.1 *Portugal and Portugais*

We have already seen in Figure (1) the lexical profile of the word *Portugal* and the contextual value of its collocations as they are used in the European Parliament. We can now proceed to the comparison between the linguistic behaviour of the word *Portugal* in political (Europarl corpus) and online discourse (FrTenTen corpus). Figure (2) shows lexical profiles of the word *Portugal* in both discourse genres.
As shown in Figure (2), the proportion of structures where the word Portugal operates as a grammatical object is considerably higher in internet discourse than in political discourse. The most frequent verbs surrounding the word Portugal in online discourse are affronter le Portugal and battre le Portugal (examples 5 and 6). The analysis of the concordances shows that these structures are used within the discussions about football.

(Serbia will confront Portugal on Monday, March 25, as part of the start of the Euro 2020 qualifiers.)

(6) La France bat le Portugal 1 à 0 et se qualifie pour la phase finale.
(France beats Portugal 1-0 to qualify for the finals.)

When the word Portugal functions as the subject within internet discourse, it refers to the context of football as well (remporter and affronter, examples 7 and 8):

(7) Avec cette victoire au stade de France, le Portugal remporte son premier grand titre. (With this victory at the Stade de France, Portugal wins its first major title.)
Ce lundi 26 mars, le Portugal affronte les Pays-Bas en match de préparation à la Coupe du monde 2018.

(This Monday, March 26, Portugal confronts the Netherlands in a preparation match for the 2018 World Cup.)

The next term to be analysed on grammatical and discourse levels was the adjective portugais produced in French political and online discourse, as shown in Figure (3):

Figure 3. Portugais: lexical profile in Europarl and FrTenTen corpora.

Figure (3) shows that in political discourse the most typical nouns accompanied by the adjective portugais are présidence, gouvernement, pêcheur, ministre, and flotte, and in internet discourse the most typical nouns are colonie, technicien, entraîneur, and footballeur.

The analysis of concordances reveals that in political discourse the most typical nouns are related to Portugal’s presidency of the European Union and the important field of maritime affairs activities, especially fishing (example 9):

(9) Je vous remercie, M. le Président, pour votre discours et je souhaite un franc succès à la présidence portugaise.

(Thank you, Mr. President, for your speech and I wish great success to the Portuguese Presidency.)

In online discourse, on the other hand, the adjective portugais is used especially in the context of colonization with the words colonie and navigateur (examples 10 and 11) and in the context of football, with expressions footballeur, entraîneur, and technicien (example 12):
Macao – jadis une colonie portugaise, aujourd’hui une région administrative spéciale de la République populaire de Chine, qui est l’équivalent asiatique de Las Vegas.

(Macao – once a Portuguese colony, now a special administrative region of the People’s Republic of China, which is the Asian equivalent of Las Vegas.)

Les navigateurs portugais commencèrent à explorer le monde vers le xve siècle: la découverte de l’Amérique et son occupation politique en marquèrent la grande époque.

(Portuguese navigators began to explore the world around the fifteenth century: the discovery of America and its political occupation marked its great era.)

Cette initiative permettra aux amateurs de sport de se mesurer au footballeur portugais Cristiano Ronaldo.

(This initiative will allow sports fans to compete against Portuguese footballer Cristiano Ronaldo.)

3.2 Brésil and brésilien

The second pair to examine on grammatical and contextual levels included the words Brésil and brésilien because they represent the largest Lusophone community in the world. Figure (4) shows the lexical profile of the word Brésil in the Europarl and FrTenTen corpora:

Figure 4. Brésil: lexical profile in the Europarl and the FrTenTen corpora.²

² Figure (4) also shows an example of typical corpus noise where the word horizonte is
As shown in Figure (4), political discourse contains a slightly higher proportion of structures where Brésil functions as the subject of the phrase than in internet discourse, where the word Brésil functions more often as the object of the phrase.

The analysis of concordances in political discourse shows that the most prominent structures with Brésil functioning as the subject are Brésil continue and Brésil joue. The verb continuer is used especially in the context of negative restrictions regarding certain countries of the EU (example 13):


*(Brazil continues to subject nationals of four Member States to visa requirements: Estonia, Cyprus, Malta, and Latvia.)*

Unexpectedly, in political discourse the verb jouer is not used within the topic of football but appears very frequently within the phrase jouer un rôle important (example 14):

(14) *M. le Président, il ne fait aucun doute que le Brésil joue un rôle commercial important sur la scène mondiale.*

*(Mr. President, there is no doubt that Brazil plays an important commercial role on the world stage.)*

When the word Brésil is used as a grammatical object, it is accompanied by verbs like frapper. This verb is used as a component of discussions about natural disasters, such as forest fires (example 15), which is similar to the value of the structure ravager le Portugal in online discourse concerning Portugal (picture 2).

(15) *Monsieur le Président, les tragédies environnementales qui ont frappé le Brésil prouvent que les règles du marché ne doivent pas être les seules lignes directrices des communautés internationales.*

*(Mr. President, the environmental tragedies that have struck Brazil prove that market rules should not be the only guidelines for international communities.)*

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misclassified as a verb instead of a part of the proper name Belo Horizonte. Courez notre panier cadeau de vacances en ligne vers la Belo Horizonte Brésil.
In online discourse, when Brésil is used as subject or object the most frequent verbs are remporter, affronter, and battre, all linked to the discussions about football (examples 16, 17, and 18):

16. **Le Brésil remporte la Coupe du Monde en battant l’Angleterre en demis et le Cameroun en finale.**

   *(Brazil wins the World Cup beating England in the semis and Cameroon in the final.)*

17. *Arrivé dans la surface, le Maestro envoie l’équipe de France à Francfort, où elle affrontera le Brésil pour des retrouvailles dont on rêvait.*

   *(Arrived in the area, the Maestro sends the French team to Frankfurt where it will confront Brazil for a reunion we dreamed of.)*

18. *À cette occasion, la cote des bleus pour battre le Brésil 3-0, comme leurs compatriotes footballeurs de 1998, passe de 8,5 à 12!*

   *(On this occasion, the odds for French players to beat Brazil 3-0, like their fellow footballers in 1998, went from 8.5 to 12!)*

As is clear from the examples, the most common collocations regarding Brazil in the internet discourse are related to the topic of football. However, the collocation *le Brésil exporte*, related to the economic cooperation between Brazil and the EU, is also important, as shown in example (19):

19. **Le Brésil exporte environ 40% de sa production agricole vers l’Union européenne.**

   *(Brazil exports around 40% of its agricultural production to the European Union.)*

In the second step, we produced a lexical profile of the adjective *brésilien* occurring in the French political and internet discourse (Figure 5):
As shown in Figure (5), the adjective *brésilien* in political discourse is closely related to the nouns *boeuf*, *ressortissant*, *congrès*, *sucre*, and *soja*, while in internet discourse this adjective is typically related to the nouns *lissage*, *footballeur*, *attaquant*, *président*, and *défenseur*. The analysis of concordances shows that in political discourse the nouns *boeuf*, *sucre*, and *soja* are related to the export of Brazilian food (example 20), while the nouns *ressortissant* and *congrès* are related to the topic of restrictions regarding the migrations between Brazil and the EU (example 21).

(20) *Le bœuf brésilien* destiné à l’UE n’est autorisé que lorsqu’il provient de territoires qui sont considérés comme épargnés par la fièvre aphteuse.

*Brazilian beef* destined for the EU is only allowed when it comes from territories that are considered free of foot-and-mouth disease.

(21) *Alors que les ressortissants brésiliens* peuvent se rendre sans visa dans tous les États membres de l’Union européenne, il reste quatre États membres dont les citoyens ont besoin d’un visa pour pénétrer sur le territoire brésilien.

*While Brazilian nationals* can travel visa-free to all member states of the European Union, there are still four member states whose citizens need a visa to enter Brazilian territory.

In online discourse, the most typical collocation of the adjective *brésilien* is related to hair care techniques (Brazilian hair straightening), although it has lost all conceptual connection with Brazil, as shown in example (22):
Lissage brésilien: idéal pour les cheveux colorés, décolorés, méchés.

(Brazilian hair straightening: ideal for coloured, bleached, and highlighted hair.)

Brazilian footballers are, once again, a very important topic in French online discourse (example 23):

Le jeune attaquant brésilien arrivera à Lille ce vendredi et s’engagera officiellement avec le LOSC après avoir satisfait à sa visite médicale.

(The young Brazilian striker will arrive in Lille this Friday and will officially join LOSC after having passed his medical examination.)

Another important figure is the Brazilian President, whose actions are discussed even when they are not directly related to Brazilian relations with the European Community (example 24):


(Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez have concluded a “strategic alliance” that includes cooperation in the sectors of oil, agriculture, mining, transport, and military aviation.)

3.3 Lusophonie and lusophone

In the last step, we examined the specifics of the words lusophonie and lusophone as they are used in French political and online discourse.

We were unable to make the lexical profile of the word lusophonie in political discourse due to the insufficient number of results found in the Europarl corpus. However, the fact that the word lusophonie is seldom used in French political discourse is already a result by itself, because this means that this concept has no strategic power in politics.
In the corpus FrTenTen, we can find a larger variety of expressions related to the concept of Lusophony (Figure 6):

As shown in Figure (6), the word *lusophonie* is used in online discourse together with the terms *hispanophonie* and *francophonie* and is frequently related to discussions about the possibilities of cooperation (example 25):

(25)  Les ressemblances entre **francophonie et lusophonie** ne peuvent que favoriser les relations entre ces deux ensembles, relations qui sont souhaitées de part et d’autre.

(The similarities between **Francophony and Lusophony** can only favor relations between these two sets, relations which are desired on both sides.)

The last term that we examined was the adjective *lusophone* in political and online discourse (Figure 7):
As shown in Figure (7), the most important collocation of the word *lusophone* in political discourse is *les pays lusophones* (example 26) and in online discourse the most frequent collocation is *le monde lusophone* (example 27). This slight but significant difference shows once again that the political goals focus on the formal aspect of Lusophony, represented by countries, and that the general community posting online is more interested in the entire community of Portuguese-speaking cultures.

(26) *Je parle bien évidemment du plus grand pays lusophone du monde, le Brésil.*

(I am obviously talking about the largest *Lusophone country* in the world, Brazil.)


(António Lobo Antunes received the Latin Union Prize in 2003, the Jerusalem Prize in 2005, and the Camões Prize, the most prestigious in the *Lusophone world*, in 2007.)

4 Synthesis of the results

To resume the results of our analysis, we turn to the most prominent conclusions concerning the discourse values of the key Lusophone terms in French political and online discourse (Table 1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Discourse</th>
<th>Online Discourse</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Portugal</em></td>
<td>environment, economy</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Portugais</em></td>
<td>EU presidency</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Brésil</em></td>
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<td><em>Brésilien</em></td>
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<td><em>Lusophone</em></td>
<td>countries</td>
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Table 1. Discourse values of Lusophone terms in French political and online discourse.

As shown in Table 1, the Lusophone world is considered quite differently in political and online discourses. The words *Portugal* and *portugais* are related to the topics of the environment (fires and draught) and European presidency in political discourse whilst in online discourse, they are used within the topics of football and colonies. The words *Brésil* and *brésilien* are related to the economy, environment, and food (meat) in political discourse, while in online discourse they are closer to football and beauty treatments (like hair straightening). The word *lusophonie* is not present at all in French political discourse. The word *lusophone* is applied to specific countries in political discourse, and it is related to the entire Portuguese-speaking community in online discourse.

5 Discussion

The differences between the use of the analysed terms in two different discourse genres, like the fact that political discourse is oriented more towards the economic issues of a country and online discourse is more interested in football, were to some degree intuitively expected. However, according to our understanding of the diachronic and synchronic aspects of Lusophony, we did not anticipate that one topic would get completely left out from the results:
the topic of Lusophone cultures. This gap was an unexpected result regarding the global importance that Lusophone culture has in the field of music (e.g. fado and bossa nova), dance (e.g. samba and capoeira), and literature (e.g. Fernando Pessoa and José Saramago).

One of the answers for the fact that the French (political or internet) community does not discuss Lusophone culture more prominently is probably hidden in the language barrier. While the football player Neymar can be both a national hero and a world superstar, the singer, composer, and activist Caetano Veloso can be a Brazilian superhero but his songs will never be sung worldwide by crowds, as is the case with Sting’s music. The international dissemination of José Saramago’s work, despite his Nobel Prize for Literature, depends exclusively on translators. Being very much aware of this, Saramago emphasized the importance of translators in a speech delivered in Buenos Aires in 2003: “Translators turn islands of languages that cannot understand each other into places of welcome.”

References


O mundo lusófono no discurso político e na internet franceses

Palavras-chave: Lusofonia, língua francesa, discurso político, discurso na internet, linguística de corpus

O artigo tem como objetivo examinar os termos relacionados ao conceito de lusofonia no discurso político francês e na internet para melhor compreender o papel do mundo lusófono na sociedade francófona. Realizamos uma análise gramatical e contextual das palavras Portugal, Brésil e lusofonia (e os seus adjetivos), tal como são utilizadas no corpus Europarl e nos corpora FrTenTen. Os resultados mostram várias diferenças interessantes entre os dois gêneros discursivos. No discurso político, as palavras examinadas estão relacionadas principalmente a discussões sobre economia, questões ambientais e exportações de alimentos. Por outro lado, no discurso online os termos analisados são mais frequentemente aplicados ao tema de futebol, mas também a discussões sobre colonização e tratamentos de beleza (como alisamento de cabelo brasileiro). Utilizando a análise apresentada neste estudo não conseguimos detetar o tema da cultura, o que é um resultado inesperado no que diz respeito à importância global que a cultura lusófona tem no campo da música (e.g., fado e bossa nova), da dança (e.g., samba e capoeira) e da literatura (e.g. Fernando Pessoa e José Saramago).
**Luzofonski svet v francoskem političnem in spletnem diskurzu**

**Ključne besede:** luzofonija, francoski jezik, politični diskurz, spletni diskurz, korpusno jezikoslovje


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