

University of Dayton

eCommons

Global Languages and Cultures Faculty
Publications

Department of Global Languages and Cultures

2012

'Because When Governments Speak, They Are Not Always Right': National Construction and Orthographic Conflicts in Mid- Nineteenth Century Spain

Laura Villa

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, laura.villa@uam.es

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/lng_fac_pub



Part of the [Modern Languages Commons](#), and the [Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature Commons](#)

eCommons Citation

Villa, Laura, "'Because When Governments Speak, They Are Not Always Right': National Construction and Orthographic Conflicts in Mid-Nineteenth Century Spain" (2012). *Global Languages and Cultures Faculty Publications*. 2.

https://ecommons.udayton.edu/lng_fac_pub/2

This Book Chapter is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Global Languages and Cultures at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Global Languages and Cultures Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact mschlengen1@udayton.edu, ecommons@udayton.edu.

LAURA VILLA

'Because When Governments Speak, They Are Not Always Right': National Construction and Orthographic Conflicts in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Spain

Abstract

This paper analyses the polemics surrounding the discursive legitimation and political institutionalization of different spelling systems circulating in mid-nineteenth-century Spain. In 1843, teachers associated with Madrid's Literary and Scientific Academy of Primary Education developed a simplified orthography and began to implement it in schools. In response to this independent initiative, Queen Isabel II signed a Royal Decree in 1844 that mandated the exclusive use of Royal Spanish Academy's orthography in Spain's primary education. The Literary and Scientific Academy contested the imposition and took actions to oppose its implementation, by organizing meetings and publishing essays to defend both the simplified orthography and the legitimacy of the institution. My study examines official documents, textbooks, pamphlets, minutes, etc., which provide us with a record of this linguistic ideological debate that reveals a struggle over authority and power within the linguistic and educational markets.¹

1 The reconstruction of this salient episode in the linguistic history of Spain is the result of documentary research carried out in Spain's National Library and in the Library and Archive of the Royal Spanish Academy thanks to the financial support of the Program for Cultural Cooperation between Spanish Ministry of Culture and United States Universities, managed by the University of Minnesota.

I Introduction

In the mid-nineteenth century, the orthographic and grammatical norms of the Royal Spanish Academy (henceforth RAE)² were made official. They were to be taught and used in the national school system which, at the time, was being developed in the broader context of the construction of a liberal Spanish nation (Álvarez Junco 2001; Burdiel 1998; Puelles Benítez 1999, 2004). In a larger project I look at the historical conditions that resulted in this officialization and the consequent promotion of the linguistic norms proposed by the RAE. The main objectives of this project are, on the one hand, to describe the processes of selection and codification of Spanish as Spain's national language, and the implementation of the resultant standard variety through the public school system; and on the other, to analyse the increasing relevance of the RAE as the legitimate institution in charge of the standardization of Spanish, as well as the resistant voices that challenged the constitution of the RAE as Spain's linguistic authority. The study is framed by an effort to understand linguistic polemics within the specific historical and cultural context of its production. This entails adopting a linguistic, political and historical approach that looks at the officialization of Spanish norms – as well as the discourses surrounding its implementation in the emerging public school system – as part of a broader language planning process deeply involved in tensions over nation-building and the power of the State.

These tensions clearly appeared in the debate that surrounded the officialization of the RAE's orthography in 1844 and its imposition as the legitimate spelling norm in Spain's education system, which is the focus of this paper. The nineteenth century witnessed a number of similar orthographic debates over languages such as Czech,³

² This language institution was created in 1713 after the *Académie Française* in order to 'fix the voices and vocabularies of the Castilian language with propriety, elegance, and purity' (<<http://www.rae.es/rae>>).

³ Czech's spelling reforms in the nineteenth-century were consistent with a project of linguistic and national revival. The reforms, guided by the *Matices česká*, a self-appointed linguistic institution in charge of Czech corpus planning, found the opposition of important Czech linguists (Bermel 2007: 95–105).

Dutch,⁴ German,⁵ Spanish,⁶ and Swedish, Danish and Norwegian,⁷ to name just a few. These orthographic controversies can be understood as *language ideological debates* because, on the one hand, in controversies over the spelling system 'language is central as a topic, a motif, a target' and 'language ideologies are being articulated, formed, amended, enforced' (Blommaert 1999: 1); and on the other, these orthographic debates 'are part of more general sociolinguistic processes, [...] sociopolitical developments, conflicts and struggles' (2). This model allows us to emphasize the significance of the social and political contexts, as well as the 'historical horizon of relationships of power, forms of discrimination, social engineering, [and] nation building' (2), in which these linguistic controversies emerged.

The analysis of the polemics surrounding the legitimation of competing spelling systems in mid-nineteenth-century Spain will show that Spain's orthographic debate reflected larger socio-political controversies in the educational and national contexts. The standard language, codified

- 4 Rutten & Vosters in this volume study orthographic practices and discourses on orthography in nineteenth-century Flanders. I would like to thank Rik Vosters (VU Brussels) for a fruitful exchange of ideas and materials on the parallels, differences and theoretical approaches to our objects of study.
- 5 German's lack of consensus resulted in the coexistence of several orthographic schools in different regions until the nineteenth century. The first attempt of orthographic standardization took place in 1876, right after German political unification (Johnson 2005: 19–22).
- 6 In addition to the controversial officialization in Spain that I analyse, there were simultaneous orthographic debates in other Spanish-speaking countries, such as Chile, Colombia and Mexico, where the cultural separation from the linguistic authority of Spain – the former metropolis – plays a central role. The Chilean orthographic reform – planned by Andrés Bello (1781–1865) and approved, also in 1844, amidst an intense public debate – is central to my wider project for its many connections with Spain's debate: besides a number of biographical links among the Chilean and Spanish orthographic agents, both spelling disputes shared a crucial tie to intense nation-building processes in which the education system was seen as a central instrument of the State to the promotion of the official orthography (Contreras 1993; Narvaja de Arnoux 2008; Rosenblat 1951).
- 7 The Scandinavian Orthographic Conference in Stockholm in 1869 recommended some reforms to be implemented in these three languages (Dalen 2005: 1406; Torp 2005: 1427–1431). I would like to thank Olle Josephson (Stockholm) for directing my attention to these Scandinavian orthographic debates.

by and for the school apparatus, constitutes a special linguistic practice in which socio-political antagonisms are produced and reproduced (Balibar & Laporte 1976: 21). These were projected onto the discursive representations constructed by the actors involved in the standardization processes and related educational debates. In consequence, my analysis hopes to unveil the non-linguistic dimensions of the debate over the officialization of the RAE's spelling system, by examining the linguistic ideologies proposed, exploited and reformulated in favor of and in opposition to officialization. I rely on the concept of linguistic ideologies as an analytical tool because of its potential, first, to explain 'the tie of cultural conceptions to social power' (Woolard 1998: 10), and second, to integrate the domains of language and politics, emphasizing the socio-political and economic interests embedded in linguistic matters (Kroskrity 1999: 2-3). In my analysis I focus on the discursive strategies of formulation, exploitation and reformulation of linguistic representations, that is 'systems of ideas that articulate notions of language with specific cultural, political and/or social formations' (Del Valle 2007: 22). These linguistic representations are 'related to practices and ideas that naturalize and normalize a particular socio-political order and legitimate a certain type of knowledge that supports the exercise of power and authority' (Del Valle 2007: 22).

The officialization of the RAE's spelling system was followed by an intense debate between a group of primary school teachers that proposed and defended a simplified orthography in order to universalize literacy, and governmental agencies that sanctioned and promoted a traditional spelling norm with the aim of centralizing and retaining control over language and education. When read against the broader political and historical context, the discursive confrontation between these two groups reveals the efforts made by the participants in the debate to naturalize different conceptualizations of the nation and the national education system through different strategies of representation of the self and the other.

2 The orthographic debate in mid-nineteenth-century Spain

In 1843, teachers associated with Madrid's Literary and Scientific Academy of Primary Education – an independent organization – developed a simplified spelling system and began to implement it in schools. In response to this independent initiative, the government, through the Council for Public Instruction – an advisory body created the same year to oversee the public education system – asked Queen Isabel II (1830–1904; reigned 1833–1868) to ban the reformed system from schools and to officialize the RAE's orthographic norms. The Queen agreed and in 1844 signed a Royal Decree that mandated the exclusive use of the RAE's orthography in Spain's primary instruction. The Literary and Scientific Academy of Primary Education contested the imposition and took actions to oppose its implementation by moving the debate to the public sphere. They organized meetings and published essays to defend both the simplified orthography and the legitimacy of the institution. For my study I have examined official documents, textbooks, pamphlets, minutes, etc. which provide us with a record of this linguistic ideological debate and reveal a struggle over authority and power within Spain's linguistic and educational markets.

The teachers of the Literary and Scientific Academy defended a 'radical reform' – their own words – that would produce a phonological spelling system 'completely based on the principle that, since writing is the faithful representation of the written word, its signs ought to be fixed and precisely determined' (Academia 1844: 4a).⁸ Their orthographic ideal lay in the exact correspondence between sounds and phonemes and, in consequence, they defended the following reforms: first, the simplification of pairs of letters that represented the same sound, such as, <c/q>, <c/z>, <g/j> y <i/y>, writing *cinze* instead of *quinze*, *jente* instead of *gente* and

⁸ All translations are mine. The version respecting the original orthography reads, in Spanish: 'reforma radical y basada toda sobre el principio de que, siendo la escritura la representación fiel de la palabra, deben ser fijos sus signos y exactamente determinados'.

Lola i Juan instead of *Lola y Juan*; second, the substitution of simple letters <y> and <ř> for digraphs <ll> and <rr> and of letter <n> for <m> before and <p>; third, the replacement of <x> for the combination <cs> in intervocalic position and for <s> in pre-consonantal position; fourth, the elimination of silent letters, such as <h> or <u> in the combinations <qu> y <gu>, writing *onbre* rather than *hombre* and *giso* rather than *guiso*; finally, the modification of the names of some letters, in order to achieve a regularity in the designation of the sounds, for instance, the letter <g> would be renamed 'gue' (pronounced /ɣe/) instead of the traditional 'ge' (/xe/), <c> would be 'que' (/ke/) instead of 'ce' (/θe/).⁹

In contrast, the RAE privileged an orthographic system based on the traditional criteria of etymology and usage, since 'the Orthography of all languages is founded on two principles, namely, the origin of the voices and the alterations introduced in many of them by usage, which is the supreme linguistic arbiter when it becomes general and uniform' (RAE 1845: ii).¹⁰ The disparities of these proposals – a radical phonology-based reform versus an orthography founded on etymology and usage – are rooted in different traditions that were part of the linguistic culture of the nineteenth century: the ideas of the Enlightenment versus traditional ideas derived from the study of Latin (Mourelle de Lema 2002).¹¹ For the members of the teachers' Academy, the rationality of a logical form of writing would be the main source of legitimacy for their proposal. And they did in fact claim the following:

- 9 Pradel y Alarcón (1845: 7–9) offers us a contrast between the traditional orthography defended by the RAE and the radical simplification of the primary school teachers'. The former would write 'el hombre que bebe mucho vino no se robustece', the latter 'el onbre ce bebe muho bino no se robusteze'.
- 10 'la Ortografía de todos los idiomas se funda en dos principios; á saber, el origen de las voces y la alteracion que en muchas de ellas ha introducido el uso, que es el árbitro supremo de las lenguas cuando llega á hacerse general y uniforme'.
- 11 The discussion on the principles that should drive the spelling system was by no means a new one. The history of the Spanish shows in fact a number of controversies over the spelling system as well as attempts to simplify Spanish orthography from the fifteenth century to the present day (Esteve Serrano 1982).

where reason is in play there is no resorting to usage, where reason is in play there is no resorting to tradition, where reason is in play there is no other authority, there is no Academy [RAE], no Council for Public Instruction, no government. (Academia 1844: 28a)¹²

It is necessary to point out the fact that, in spite of their discrepancies, both teachers and government banked on the promotion of one orthographic norm through the education system, as a means of solving the problem posed by the coexistence of different spelling norms. This alignment with linguistic unity is consistent with a monoglossic ideology that, relying on the romantic correspondence between language and nation, sees linguistic homogeneity as an indispensable requirement for, and the symbolic realization of, national unity.¹³

In this sense both proposals negatively portrayed the coexistence of several orthographic varieties as a source of disorder and confusion, and discursively represented themselves as the solution to orthographic chaos. For instance, the Royal Decree that imposed the officialization of the RAE's orthography explained the necessity of the intervention because 'from frequent alterations may result confusion and mistakes' (Villaláin Benito 1997: 99–100).¹⁴ More passionately, a member of the Literary and Scientific Academy, in a pamphlet entitled *No more objections and obstacles to the instruction of the people!*, stated: 'So it is clearly seen how unreasonably they label us as orthographic anarchists, when in reality our project hopes to do away precisely with anarchy and not with order' (Macías 1846: 27).¹⁵

12. 'donde hay razon no hay uso, donde hay razon no hay antigüedad, donde hay razon no hay autoridad, no hay Academia, no hay consejo de instruccion pública, no hay gobierno.'

13. Del Valle (2000; 2006) explains that this ideology is grounded on the following assumptions: 'that what linguistically characterizes an individual as well as a community is possession of a well defined and relatively stable grammar' (2006: 119) and 'that people's linguistic behavior tends to become homogeneous over time through pressure from the dominant norm of the community' (120).

14. 'de frecuentes alteraciones puede resultar confusión y equivocaciones.'

15. 'Véase pues claramente con cuan poca razon se nos acusa de anarquistas ortográficos, cuando en la realidad á extinguir la anarquía y no el buen orden [...] es á lo que camina nuestra empresa.'

Both sides of the debate have also in common the discursive representation of their orthography as a good for the nation. Thus, the Royal Decree justified the imposition because 'all nations always proceed with extreme caution in such a delicate matter, preferring the advantages of a fixed and uniform orthography understood by all' (Villalaín Benito 1997: 99–100).¹⁶ For their part, the teachers' association publicly defended that the simplified orthography is 'illustrious, useful and beneficial not only for the good of the children, but for the good of the nation in general' (Academia 1844: 38b).¹⁷

The previous description of the discourses for or against the orthographic simplification leads us to two important conclusions. On the one hand, both teachers and government agreed on the necessity of unifying the orthography 'for the good of the nation', relying on nationalist arguments in order to defend the unification of the linguistic market. On the other hand, each actor involved in this controversy represented its proposal as having some value outside the market, presenting the spelling systems as more rational or more natural and, therefore, concealing the extra-linguistic motivation of the debate: a struggle to position themselves as the legitimate authority in a changing educational market.

Earlier valuable studies of this important episode in the history of the standardization of Spanish have followed this logic in their analysis: they described the linguistic characteristics of each proposal, linked the officialization to the growing power of the central State, or evaluated the benefits of the simplified orthography in terms of the spread of education. Among the most relevant work on the officialization of the RAE's orthography are Esteve Serrano (1982) and Martínez de Sousa (1991), who briefly describe the episode in their histories of the Spanish orthographic reform, Martínez Alcalde (2010), who also mentions the officialization of the RAE's orthography in her study of the standardization of Spanish spelling,

16 'Todas las naciones proceden siempre con suma circunspección en tan delicado punto, prefiriendo las ventajas de una ortografía fija, uniforme y comprendida por todos'.

17 'eminente, útil y provechosa no solo al bien de la niñez, sino de la nación en general'.

Rosenblat (1951), a key study to understand the officialization as tied to the project of construction of a liberal Spanish nation, and Quilis Merín (2008), who links the orthographic simplification to the universalization of literacy intended by liberal political movements, in her examination of the orthographic ideas in Domínguez's *Diccionario nacional*. Despite the great interest of these studies, they focus exclusively on the simplification carried out by the Literary and Scientific Academy before the officialization of the RAE's orthography, thus overlooking the teachers' reaction to the enforcement of the Royal Decree. These works also failed to take into account the socio-political nature of the debate. An in-depth analysis of primary source and original documentation will reveal an extra-linguistic dimension in the discourses displayed by the participants in this orthographic controversy.

3 The non-linguistic nature of the orthographic debate

Interestingly enough, and significantly for the outcome of the debate, a great discursive effort was oriented to legitimate not the advisability of the orthography itself, but rather the authority of the institutions that raised their voices in this linguistic-educational matter. The Literary and Scientific Academy put forward a pedagogical argument to defend their proposal: a simplified orthography, they claimed, would be learned faster and 'written by everyone with more propriety and fewer mistakes' (Academia 1844: 14b).¹⁸ The teachers grounded their legitimacy to intervene in linguistic matters in their experience educating both primary school children and adult workers, both men and women. One member of the educational association explained that the orthographic reform is a response to 'a thousand and one troubles and inconveniences that only one dedicated to teaching

¹⁸ Emphasis in the original Spanish: 'se escribe por todos con mas propiedad y menos equivocaciones'.

can duly perceive' (Academia 1844: 12.a-b).¹⁹ Another teacher denounced the RAE's orthographic manual imposed as the official textbook in primary schools pointing out that the RAE's reference book could by no means exceed 'the many compendia that have been written by experienced teachers that touch and feel the difficulties caused by the anomalies in several letters of our alphabet' (Hernando 1845: 3-4).²⁰

If the Literary and Scientific Academy relied on pedagogical and professional arguments to defend the legitimacy of both their institution and their orthographic proposal, the government, in line with their project of a centralized public education system, used openly political arguments, represented the officialization of Spanish orthography as a national necessity and used its power to impose it. The governmental Council for Public Instruction turned to the Crown, the highest institution of political authority and symbolic power, and to the State apparatus, making political leaders and the Committees of Primary Instruction responsible for implementing the Royal Decree. With this officialization of the orthography, linguistic matters became 'a concern of the State' (Rosenblat 1951: cxxiv); in Spain's language policy and linguistic discourse, language unity turned into an instrument to maintain and promote the national consensus. After the Royal Decree, the orthography became a matter of national interest because it symbolically represented the nation, and its officialization came to be considered 'an issue of extreme significance due to the serious damage that can be done by the misunderstanding caused by an impure orthography in important documents' (Villaláin Benito 1997: 99-100).²¹ The Spanish language was therefore declared a political issue which, due to its centrality to the nation, should be managed by the Crown, the central government and the institutions tied to them, such as the Council for Public Instruction or the RAE.

19 'mil fatigas é incomodidades, que solo puede apreciar debidamente el que está dedicado á la enseñanza'.

20 'lo mucho que hay escrito por profesores prácticos en diferentes compendios [...] los que tocan y palpan las dificultades que producen en la enseñanza las anomalías que contienen varias letras de nuestro alfabeto'.

21 'asunto [...] de suma trascendencia por los graves perjuicios que puede acarrear en documentos importantes la equivocada inteligencia de lo escrito por efecto de una ortografía adulterada'.

The public debate reflected the political nature of the orthographic controversy and the discourses displayed both in favor of and against the proposed reform were riddled with political representations of the opponent: the teachers were labeled as linguistic anarchists and antipatriotic; they, in turn, represented the central government as absolutist and despotic. For instance, they accused the government of excessive authoritarianism: primary school teachers were forced to comply with the Royal Decree under threat of suspension. In a heated public meeting, organized by the Literary and Scientific Academy to discuss the advantages of the phonological orthography, some teachers called for action against the 'despotic agents': 'Let's join forces, now is the time, to face our worries and even to confront power, since it rides roughshod over our rights and offend against our honor' (Academia 1844: 17a).²² One teacher present in that meeting even made the government responsible for the uprising of the people since 'when governments speak, they are not always right [...] and unfortunately at many times they impose restrictive precepts to good things [...] whence their discredit as well as the frequent revolutions that we are going through spring up' (Academia 1844: 30b).²³

The linguistic ideological debate that surrounded the officialization of the Spanish orthography confirms that, as Woolard states: '[t]he definition of what is and what is not literacy is never a purely technical but always a political matter' (Woolard 1998: 23). The discursive representation of the self and the other, in this sense, reflected a broader socio-political struggle. The exchange of accusations, such as the Literary and Scientific Academy's ardent insistence on the government's tyranny and despotism, or the government's fervent proclamation of the teachers' whim, ignorance and irresponsibility, went beyond the linguistic terrain. What was at stake, I argue, was control over the educational market, that is, the governance of public and private educational spaces, institutions and legal competence.

22. 'Unámonos; que aun es hora, para hacer frente á la preocupacion, y aun al poder, cuando holle nuestros derechos ó ultraje nuestro honor'.

23. 'que cuando los Gobiernos hablan, no siempre tienen razon [...] y que muchas veces por desgracia ponen preceptos restrictivos á lo bueno y [...] de lo cual nace su descrédito y las frecuentes revoluciones por las cuales vamos atavesando'.

I rely on Bourdieu's (1991) work and terminology to emphasize the field tensions operating within those educational spaces as well as the struggles over authority within the market. Bourdieu's model also accounts for the different value acquired, based on social conditions, by diverse linguistic practices (different spelling systems, for instance). Moreover I chose the term 'educational market' for its relation to the linguistic and labor markets, since the linguistic practices unfavorably valued in the first one could restrict access to the others. For instance, after the officialization of the orthography, teachers would be severely evaluated on this subject. Those who failed the exam would lose the authorization to practice their profession.

The steps taken by the central government in order to promote a public national education brought about the rearrangement of the educational market, a redistribution of power and, consequently, a struggle to manage the market, intensified by the severe centralization that the public education was undergoing. The Literary and Scientific Academy, an independent association which 'hoped to gain the monopoly of the Court's public education' (Gómez R. de Castro 1983: 50), fought to retain power over the educational space not monopolized by the Catholic Church. The government was also trying to control strategic markets in order to spread the national consensus. They realized that, according to the prominent intellectual Antonio Gil de Zárate (1796-1861), first director of the Council for Public Instruction, also a member of the RAE: 'education is a matter of power: the one who teaches dominates; given that to teach is to form men, men adapted to the viewpoint of the one who indoctrinates' (Gil de Zárate 1855: 117).²⁴

24 'la cuestión de la enseñanza es una cuestión de poder: el que enseña, domina; puesto que enseñar es formar hombres, y hombres amoldados a las miras del que los adoctrina'.

4 Linguistic standardization and the nation-building project

The officialization of the RAE's linguistic norms, a milestone in the standardization of Spanish, occurred throughout Queen Isabel II's reign. During those decades the central government engaged in the construction of a liberal monarchic Spanish nation, projected since the Cadiz Constitution (1812) and slowed down during Fernando VII's (1784–1833) absolutist rule (1814–1820 and 1823–1833).²⁵ The legislative machinery of Queen Isabel II was mobilized at the service of the nation-building project, conceived during her reign from a moderate and traditionalist perspective in keeping with the conservative character of the majority of the governments formed since 1843. As part of the development of State power and institutions, a national centralist school system was developed in the mid-century.²⁶ For example, the education system became fully regulated, through educational plans and legislative initiatives – such as the 'plan Rivas' in 1836, the 'ley Someruelos' for primary education in 1838 or the 'plan Pidal' for secondary and university instruction. The legal constitution of Spain's instruction culminated in the first comprehensive education law, the 'ley Moyano', approved in 1857 – that in its article 88 ratified the special status of the Royal Academy's linguistic norms. The central government also took steps to create institutions, such as the abovementioned Council for Public Instruction, in charge of controlling public education since 1843.

The processes of State formation typically create the conditions for 'the constitution of a unified linguistic market, dominated by the official language' which is 'bound up with the state' (Bourdieu 1991: 45).

25 Ifollow Álvarez Junco (2001), Burdiel (1998), and Carr (1969) for a historical contextualization of Queen Isabel II's reign, as well as for a detailed description of political movements and nation-building processes during her sovereignty.

26 Puelles Benítez's works (1999, 2004, and 2005) provide a precise account of the significance of the public school system within the politics oriented to the centralization and growth of State power. The author concludes that a conservative turn in the educational project and a lack of investment in public instruction resulted in the failure of the universalization of education in nineteenth-century Spain.

Language seems to be an essential element in the promotion of the national feeling of loyalty and solidarity to the national community that imagines itself as unitary thanks, in part, to the standard language spread through the print, the literature and the press (Anderson 1983). Education appears as a central mechanism in the spread of national consensus and the homogenization of the national community and, therefore, in the standardization process 'that leads to the construction, legitimation and imposition of an official language, the educational system plays a decisive role' (Bourdieu 1991: 48). Earlier research on the rise of public school systems in the nineteenth century has shown that the State's interest in public instruction is necessarily tied to the larger project of national construction, both in its most material dimension and in the formation of collective national ideologies that would legitimate State power (Green 1990: 77).

The processes of linguistic standardization in mid-nineteenth-century Spain are also embedded in nation-building processes: the selection, promotion and implementation of the official variety – and all related language policies – contributed to the consolidation of State power in several ways. On the one hand, the standard language made it possible to spread a national school system that would disseminate public instruction and create citizens capable of exercising the rights and fulfilling the duties imposed by the State. On the other, the official variety facilitated the consolidation of the State's bureaucracy and legislation, by offering the homogenization required to the viability of a central administration. And finally, the dissemination of (the idea of) a language shared by all members of the national community promoted a loyalty attachment to the nation, strengthening its symbolic representation.

In this fight over the control and management of the education, the RAE began to position itself as the institution of linguistic and cultural reference, a position that this academy would eventually maintain until the present day. The privileged political situation that its most renowned members enjoyed at the particular time covered by my study contributed to the constitution of the RAE as the language authority, as the legitimate prescriptive voice that dictates the norms of linguistic correction. For instance, the director of the RAE at the time of the officialization, Francisco Martínez de la Rosa (1787–1862), was also the president of the

influential Ateneo Científico y Literario de Madrid – an exclusive private cultural club where the most significant intellectuals contributed to Spain's scientific and cultural discussion since the beginning of the nineteenth century – and occupied throughout his life several political and governmental positions, such as representative in the Cortes de Cadiz, president of the Conservative party, Prime Minister, or president of the Congress. The influence of the RAE in educational offices was also crucial: Gil de Zárate, who joined the cultural institution in 1841, held different offices within the developing public school system, such as general director of Public Instruction, or director of the Council for Public Instruction. He also played a central role in the redaction of the ley Moyano and his *Manual de literatura española*, composed between 1842 and 1844, contributed to the early institutionalization of Spain's literary canon. The Council for Public Instruction, that alerted Queen Isabel II to the abuses of school teachers in orthographic matters, counted among their members with four academicians at the time of its creation: Manuel José de la Quintana (1772–1857), Eugenio de Tapia (1776–1860), Martín Fernández Navarrete (1765–1844) and RAE's perpetual secretary Juan Nicasio Gallego (1777–1853) (Ceprián Nieto 1991: 437–439). The exploitation of the royal status of the institution and, in particular, of the connections offered by the political offices held by its members would determine their ability not only to intervene in the State educational institution but also to access the public spaces of intellectual discussion.

5 Conclusion

To conclude, my analysis understands language as a socio-cultural construction and aims at studying linguistic polemics within their specific historical and cultural context. I have presented an example of this historically situated approach to language, analyzing the linguistic ideological debate surrounding the officialization of the RAE's spelling system. The

orthographic debate was certainly one of the most intense linguistic controversies in Spain during the nineteenth century: it reached the public sphere and transcended both the academic realm and the linguistic field. It was not, however, an isolated event. It was in fact embedded in the process of linguistic standardization of Spanish which, in the mid-nineteenth century, played a central role in the representation of and exclusion from the national community. The standard language, likewise, became an essential object, necessarily shared by the members of the national community, and therefore it was promoted through the development of 'a free, mandatory state education system' that was felt to be a requirement for building the nation-state, as well as a mechanism, together with the anthem, the flag, the army and national history, to spread the national consensus (Álvarez Junco 2001: 545).

The linguistic ideological debate between governmental agencies and the Literary and Scientific Academy reflected an intense struggle to gain or retain authority over educational matters in the rearrangement of the market brought about by the centralization of instruction. As previously discussed, the battle over control of the linguistic and educational markets bent to the central government and, in particular, to the RAE, whose orthography and grammar were ratified, by the celebrated *ley Moyano*, as the official textbooks both for primary and secondary schools.

The centrality of the orthographic episode derives from the fact that it shows that the rise of the Spanish orthographic system that is still in use today, responded not to a strictly linguistic process but rather to the complex interaction between linguistic practices and social and political institutions. Our approach aims at bringing to the forefront the sociopolitical dimension of the history of Spanish, by attending to those salient moments that reflect the dynamic intersection between linguistic, cultural, social and political issues and help us to understand language policies and linguistic authority in contemporary Spain.

References

- Academia Literaria i Científica de Instrucción Primaria. 1844. *Sesión Pública celebrada el día 3 de octubre de 1844, en el salón del instituto español. Por la Academia de profesores de primera educación, para demostrar las ventajas que ofrece la reforma de ortografía adoptada y publicada por la misma Academia. Dedicada a los profesores y amantes de la educación*. Madrid: Imprenta de D^a. Francisca Estevan.
- Álvarez Junco, José. 2001. *Mater dolorosa. La idea de España en el siglo XIX*. Madrid: Taurus.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.
- Balibar, Renée, & Dominique Laporte. 1976. *Burguesía y lengua*. Barcelona: Avance.
- Bermel, Neil. 2007. *Linguistic Authority, Language Ideology, and Metaphor. The Czech Orthographic Wars*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Bloomaert, Jan. 1999. *Language Ideological Debates*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.
- Burdiel, Isabel. 1998. *La política en el reinado de Isabel II*. Madrid: Marcial Pons.
- Carr, Raymond. 1969. *España 1808–1939*. Barcelona: Ariel.
- Ceprián Nieto, Bernardo. 1991. *Del Consejo de Instrucción Pública al Consejo Escolar del Estado: origen y evolución (1836–1986)*. Madrid: UNED.
- Contreras, Lidia. 1993. *Historia de las ideas ortográficas en Chile*. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria.
- Dalen, Arnold. 2005. 'Sources of Written and Oral Language in the 19th Century.' In: Bandle, Oscar (ed.), *The Nordic Languages. An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1406–1419.
- Del Valle, José. 2000. 'Monoglossic Policies for a Heteroglossic Culture: Misinterpreted Multilingualism in Modern Galicia.' *Language and Communication* 20, 105–132.
- Del Valle, José. 2006. 'US Latinos, la hispanofonia and the Language Ideologies of High Modernity.' In: Mar-Molinero, Clare, & Miranda Stewart (eds), *Globalization and Language in the Spanish-Speaking World: Macro and Micro Perspectives*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 27–46.
- Del Valle, José. 2007. 'Glottopolítica, ideología y discurso: un marco conceptual para el estudio de la difusión del español.' In: Del Valle, José (ed.), *La lengua, ¿patria común?* Frankfurt/Madrid: Vervuert/Iberoamericana, 13–29.

- Esteve Serrano, Abraham. 1982. *Estudios de teoría ortográfica del español*. Murcia: Universidad de Murcia.
- Gil de Zárate, Antonio. 1855. *De la Instrucción pública en España*. Madrid: Impr. del Colegio de Sordomudos.
- Gómez R. de Castro, Federico. 1983. 'La resistencia a las innovaciones. Informe de la Academia de Profesores de Primera Educación.' *Historia de la educación* 2, 49-53.
- Green, Andy. 1990. *Education and the State Formation: The Rise of Education Systems in England, France and the USA*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Hernando, Victoriano. 1845. *Impugnación razonada en contra del prontuario de ortografía castellana que de Real Orden ha compuesto la Academia de la lengua española, con arreglo a su último diccionario, para uso de las escuelas públicas*. Madrid: Imprenta de D. Victoriano Hernando.
- Johnson, Sally. 2005. *Spelling Trouble? Language, Ideology and the Reform of German Orthography*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Kroskrity, Paul V. 1999. *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Macías, Felipe Antonio. 1846. *¡No mas trabas ni obstáculos a la instruccion del pueblo! ¡Abajo! (Entre las clases sin pretension de eruditas)*. *Ortografía irracional. Debate lógico, sobre las diferentes anomalias de la ortografía castellana, y sobre la conveniencia e inconveniencia de su proyectada reforma. Para servir de aditamento crítico, al Manual completo de instruccion primaria elemental y superior de D. Joaquin Avendaño*. Bilbao: Imprenta y litografía de Delmas é hijo.
- Martínez Alcalde, María José. 2010. *La fijación ortográfica: norma y argumento historiográfico*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Martínez de Sousa, José. 1991. *Reforma de la ortografía española. Estudio y Pautas*. Madrid: Visor.
- Mourelle de Lema, Manuel. 2002. *La teoría lingüística de la España del siglo XIX*. Madrid: Grugalma Ediciones.
- Narvaja de Arnoux, Elvira. 2008. *Los discursos sobre la nación y el lenguaje en la formación del Estado (Chile 1842-1862)*. Buenos Aires: Santiago Arcos.
- Pradel y Alarcón, Francisco. 1845. *Juicio crítico acerca del prontuario de Ortografía de la lengua castellana dispuesto de real orden para el uso de las escuelas públicas por la Real Academia Española, y sobre su impugnacion por los que pretenden la reforma del alfabeto*. Madrid: Imprenta del Colegio de Sordo-Mudos y Ciegos.
- Puelles Benítez, Manuel. 1999. *Educación e ideología en la España contemporánea*. Madrid: Tecnos.
- Puelles Benítez, Manuel. 2004. *Estado y educación en la España liberal (1809-1837) un sistema educativo nacional frustrado*. Barcelona: Pomares-Corredor.

- Puelles Benítez, Manuel. 2005. 'El Consejo Escolar del Estado: antecedentes, evolución y situación actual.' In: *Revista del Consejo Escolar del Estado: La participación de la comunidad educativa en el debate de la LOE* 44, 44-49. <<http://www.mec.es/cesces/revista/revista0.pdf>> accessed 18 August 2011.
- RAE. 1844. *Prontuario de Ortografía de la lengua castellana dispuesto de Real Orden para el uso de las escuelas públicas por la Real Academia Española con arreglo al sistema adoptado en la novena edición de su diccionario*. Madrid: Impr. Nacional.
- RAE. 1999. *Ortografía de la lengua española*. Madrid: Espasa. <[http://www.rae.es/rae/gestores/gespubo00015.nsf/\(voanexos\)/arch7E8694F9D6446133C12571640039A189/\\$FILE/Ortografia.pdf](http://www.rae.es/rae/gestores/gespubo00015.nsf/(voanexos)/arch7E8694F9D6446133C12571640039A189/$FILE/Ortografia.pdf)>.
- Rosenblat, Ángel. 1951. 'Las ideas ortográficas de Bello.' In: Bello, Andrés, *Obras completas*. V. Caracas: Ministerio de Educación, 9-138.
- Torp, Arne. 2005. 'The Nordic Language in the 19th Century I: Phonology and Orthography.' In: Bandle, Oscar (ed.), *The Nordic Languages. An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1425-1436.
- Villalain Benito, José. 1997. *Manuales escolares en España. Legislación 1812-1939*. Madrid: UNED.
- Woolard, Kathryn. 1998. 'Introduction: Language Ideologies as a Field of Inquiry.' In: Schieffelin, Bambi, Kathryn Woolard & Paul V. Kroskrity, *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 3-50.