

Debating the 1990 Luso-Brazilian Orthographic Accord

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A case of corpus cultivation language planning is reported here: the 1990 Luso-Brazilian Orthographic Accord for the seven Portuguese-speaking countries discussed here, signed by representatives of all seven countries that have Portuguese as their official language. Socio-historical background is provided about Portuguese standardization and spread, the distribution of the language in the world today, and the development of its spelling norms. Discussion of the Accord and the ensuing debate is carried out through an analysis of the positions taken and of the arguments used by authors in a selection of scholarly and journalistic articles. These arguments are contrasted with Geerts, van den Broeck and Verdoodt (1977) who reported on a similar case. The author concludes that while most of the debate revolves around issues of linguistic efficiency, the Accord and its proponents are primarily concerned with political and diplomatic efficiency.

Brasil e Portugal travam uma guerra surda em torno de um idioma que o mundo ignora, mesmo em suas melhores manifestações literárias (Nelson Ascher, *Folha de São Paulo*, January 23, 1993).

Introduction

Language planning involves "deliberate efforts to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes" (Cooper, 1989:45). In the present case, these efforts concentrate on the structure of the code, more specifically on the written code of the language. This is a case of *corpus planning*, in Kloss' terms (in Cooper, 1989), and of *cultivation* in Neustupny's....further discrimination of different language planning efforts (1974:35). It has to do with "the creation of new forms, the modification of old ones, [and/] or the selection from alternative forms in a...written code" (Cooper, 1989:31). In fact this is a case of what Cooper calls "*renovation* for the object of corpus planning" (1989:154). Cooper defines the term renovation as "an effort to change an already developed code,

whether in the name of efficiency, aesthetics, or national or political ideology" (p. 154, emphasis added).

The main concern here is to examine the present state of the Lusophone orthographic quest—the implementation of the 1990 Orthographic Accord that unifies the two official orthographies of Portuguese currently in effect in Brazil and in Portugal. As a speaker of Brazilian Portuguese, I have not attempted to be neutral but have tried to write an unbiased report—in spite of Gundersen's warning that "it is probably impossible for a native writer to be completely unbiased on the language question" (1977:248).

Spelling reforms seem to awaken people's language attitudes and inevitably generate heated debates: see reports for Norwegian (Gundersen, 1977), Hebrew (Rabin, 1977), and Irish (Murchú, 1977). As Rabin explains, orthographic planning affects the whole population of users of the language, and spelling changes "cannot be introduced gradually, but require an immediate willingness to change habits" (1977:172). Thus the debate, though "intended to be objective,...becomes partisan and often polemic as it goes along" (Gundersen, 1977:247). The Luso-Brazilian case is not original in this regard.

The debate around the Orthographic Accord occurs within a complex context. I provide some background on the code it modifies, and on the community of users whose language behavior it aims to influence. The following sections describe the historical development of Portuguese standardization. A sketch of the distribution of the language in the world today offers a glimpse at the socio-economic features of the nations involved, while a brief history of the development of Portuguese spelling norms locates the 1990 Orthographic Accord across time. In the presentation of the Luso-Brazilian debate, I introduce the different positions held and then discuss the various types of arguments.

The Portuguese Language and the Lusophone Community

With its earliest records traced back to the 12th century, Portuguese has been a standardized language since the 15th century. With Camões' 1572 epic, *Os Lusíadas*, modern Portuguese acquired full citizenship as a literary language. However, the first grammars and dictionaries appeared only in the 16th and 17th centuries (Spina, 1987).

The discoveries of the Portuguese navigators spread their language to America, Africa, and Asia. Today there are at least 160 million people whose native language is Portuguese, most of them in Brazil and Portugal. Five African countries have Portuguese as their official language: Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau,

Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe. (These are the so-called PALOP countries—*Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa*.)

Brazilian sociolinguist Elia (1989) distinguishes five stages of Portuguese geolinguistic spread: Old (Portugal), new (Brazil), very new (the PALOP), lost (Goa, Macao, and East Timor), and dispersed (immigrant communities). The taxonomy points to the diversity of the Lusophone world, disallowing a definition of *speech community* that would suit all five areas. For the present purposes, the seven countries that have Portuguese as their official language shall be considered as the Portuguese *language community*.

The status of Portuguese within this community varies tremendously. Elia (1989) adapts a set of language planning concepts as labels to draw distinctions for the status of Portuguese in the different nations: indigenous or transplanted language (i or t), mother language or lingua franca (m or f), official language (l), national language (i.e., spoken throughout the country [n]), and standard language of culture (language used in education, mass media, and literature [c]). The table below reproduces Elia's classification, lists the main languages in each country, and offers a glance at the socio-economic features of the seven Lusophone countries through figures for population (in millions), Gross National Product (in billions of \$US), and literacy rate (as percentage of population over 7).

	Status (Elia, 1989)	Main language(s) spoken	Pop. 1991†	GNP 1990†	Literacy rate†
Portugal	i, m, o, n, c	Portuguese	10.42	50.7	86.0
Brazil	t, m, o, n, c	Portuguese	146.15	450.5	82.2
Angola	t, f, o, c	Portuguese & African Lgs.	10.28	5.9	41.7
Mozambique	t, f**, o, c	Portuguese & African Lgs.	14.63	1.14***	32.9
Guinea-Bissau	t, o, c	GB Creole & African Lgs.	0.94	0.176	36.5
Cape Verde	t, o, c	Cape Verdean Creole	0.34	0.281	65.5
São Tomé & Príncipe	t, o, c	Creoles	0.12	0.047	57.4

*PALOP, **added to Elia's (1989) classification, ***1991, †*Almanaque Abril* 1993

As the table above indicates, having Portuguese as the official language is perhaps the only factor that applies equally to all seven countries. Politically speaking,

Brazil looms large, with a population and an economy a number of times bigger than all of the other Lusophone countries combined. Portugal, besides its tradition as a former colonial power and as the country where the language came into being, has a most important economic strength in its EEC membership. The PALOP are obviously at a political disadvantage, since they are peripheral states with minute economies, so it is not difficult to surmise what leads them to have little interest in the debate over the Accord.

We can establish three groups of countries based on two criteria: size of population and economy, and, status of Portuguese in relation to other languages. On the one hand we have Portugal and Brazil—long established nations with relatively large populations and economies, where Portuguese is universally spoken and widely written and read. On the other hand, we have the recently independent PALOP countries—where Portuguese is the only official language of government and education but has limited currency. The PALOP can in turn be grouped in two different sets: the larger mainland countries of Angola and Mozambique, where Portuguese is challenged in most domains by various African languages; and the tiny island-states of Cape Verde, and São Tomé and Príncipe, where it is challenged by the local Creole languages. Guinea-Bissau is a borderline case in terms of size and of the status of Portuguese, since it shares much of the macrosociolinguistic situation of Angola and Mozambique, while also having its own local Creole.

The existence of an indigenous language variety belonging to no ethnic group creates an unstable diglossic situation in Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Guinea-Bissau. Despite the governments' positions of maintaining Portuguese as the sole official language, the prominence of the Creoles is unquestionable (Elia, 1989:39), and their standardization for official adoption is seen as a necessary step by some.¹ The following segment of the talk given by the representative of Guinea-Bissau, M. A. Henriques, at a 1983 meeting to assess the state of the language in the world, quoted in Elia, summarizes the attitude of Portuguese speakers in the three small African countries:

Portuguese is seen as the official language, it is seen as the language of scientific knowledge, it is seen as the language for international communication....we have a profound interest in Portuguese, not only for the historic relations we have with Portugal, but also with the privileged relations that we have with Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde and S. Tomé and Príncipe, and also because, in fact, Portuguese is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world.² (1989:41)

In civil-war ravaged Angola and Mozambique, Portuguese is the language of the government and of schooling as well as the language of wider communication, since there are no common local creole languages. Standard Portuguese is spoken mainly in urban centers, and as a lingua franca among the different ethnic groups.³ The sociolinguistic situation of both these countries is rather complex, and the status of Portuguese is unstable.

The numbers reported vary, but we can assume that around 25% of the population of Mozambique routinely use the language of the former colonial power, though no more than 1.2% consider it their mother-tongue ("Português é," 1993; Passanisi & Wolfe, 1991; Elia, 1989). Passanisi and Wolfe present an ethnographic account of what they term "the identity crises" of educated Mozambicans toward their language resources. They state that "a combination of national languages and Portuguese is needed as a survival tactic" (1991:33), and add that "being fluent in Portuguese has been and continues to be a primary route to general information about Mozambique, to continued state-supported educational opportunities, and to vocational access" (30).

The situation in Angola might be roughly the same, but there are reasons to believe that Portuguese has a larger currency there, since a sizable group takes it as their mother-tongue. According to Cristóvão (in Elia, 1989:32-3), 60% of the residents of the province of Luanda, which includes the capital city, declared Portuguese as their native language in a 1983 census. In the hinterland however, Portuguese has but a marginal role.

This brief sketch of the Lusophone community sheds light on the attitude of the PALOP countries to accept whatever is decided by Brazil and Portugal in respect to the future of the Orthographic Accord. Their position is consistent with Neustupny's claim (1974) that less developed speech communities are concerned with issues of language policy, and not so much with issues of cultivation such as the ones tackled by a spelling unification. PALOP language planners cannot prioritize Portuguese corpus planning when they are still struggling with status planning issues in a scenario of extremely limited economic resources. After all, Portuguese was chosen as the official language because of its advantages as a fully standardized language.

In a report on the opinions of PALOP intellectuals about the Accord, São Tomé and Príncipe journalist Conceição Lima warns:

In a country where basic problems are yet to be solved—lack of classrooms, chairs, glass on the windows—talking about an orthographic agreement has a vaguely surrealist resonance....An Accord for a

population that is 60% to 70% illiterate or for people who have no reading habits, for whom orality is fundamental, and where the teachers of Portuguese have huge difficulties relating to the language they teach?! (Neves, 1991)

Despite the rhetoric implicit in the title of the 1990 Orthographic Accord, i.e. that it is an aspiration of the larger Lusophone world, it is a fact that the PALOP can hardly afford to get involved in this debate. The Accord is therefore a Luso-Brazilian enterprise.

Portuguese Spelling Norms⁴

Portuguese has a long orthographic history. Historians of the language agree about the existence of three distinct phases in the development of its spelling norms (Williams, 1938; Cuesta & Luz, 1971:335-41, in I. Castro, Duarte & Leiria, 1987:117; Houaiss, 1991).

In the early stages of codification, there was no centralized spelling rule, no orthography to speak of, since the few writers at the time used the Latin alphabet as best they could in writing down the sounds of Galician-Portuguese. The initial spelling criterion was essentially phonetic, with a few "etymological tendencies from the pen of some scribes who were used to copying and drafting documents in Medieval Latin" (Hauy, 1989:32). This "phonetic phase" lasted until the 16th century.

The influence of classical Latin and Greek during the Renaissance brought a variety of philological spellings. Pinto (1988) describes the work of 17th and 18th century grammarians as extremely concerned with orthographic norms, but yet unable to escape the contradictions of their two masters (i.e., traditional Portuguese phonetic spelling, and the contemporary cult of classic traditions which favored etymological spelling). Houaiss calls this second phase the "pseudo-etymological phase," adding that at this point "spelling becomes more difficult, and pseudo-experts who advocate the use of old-fashioned or mistaken spellings determine the history of words" (1991:11). Bueno (1967) refers to a "mixed norm," regulated by dictionary makers and independent "orthographers," which developed in Brazil as a result of the etymological tendencies active until the 19th century.

The third phase can rightly be called an orthography, since the power of the "experts" and of the law is added to the enforcement of new directions toward a simplified spelling system. As Bueno puts it, "the orthography of the Portuguese language developed all the way to 1911 without any [successful] official interference, either from the government or from the Academies" (1967:277). Houaiss (1991) calls

this the "simplified phase." More realistically perhaps, the Portuguese grammarians Cuesta and Luz call it "the period of orthographic reforms" (in R. Castro 1987:117).

20th Century Orthographies

Like other Romance-language-speaking countries, Portugal has its own language academy—the Academy of Sciences of Lisbon (ACL)—founded in 1779. The Brazilian Academy of Language and Literature (ABL) was created in the late 19th century. ACL and ABL have been the main institutions dealing with the regulation of Portuguese orthography.

Starting 1885, Gonçalves Viana, a Portuguese language scholar, devised a plan for a spelling reform, which he concluded in 1904 with the publication of his *Ortografia Nacional*. In 1911 the newly installed republican government promulgated a slightly revised version of Viana's proposal known as "the New Orthography." However, no attempt was made to consult the Brazilian government or ABL. I. Castro (1987:XI) refers to the 1911 Reform as "magnificent, but unilateral"; in other words, linguistically efficient but diplomatically inadequate.

There was domestic disagreement in Brazil concerning Portugal's "linguistic imperialism." ABL's choice to adopt the New Orthography in 1915, and the subsequent move four years later to revoke its own decision reflect that. In any case, the prevailing Brazilian opinion was that Portugal had created a schism between the two countries (Castro, et al., 1987:209). Despite the Portuguese government's optimism in a 1920 official addendum to the 1911 decree, which referred to the "enthusiastic acceptance of the New Orthography in Brazil" (Freeman, 1965:108), there was great oscillation in orthographic use in Brazil, with the press and intellectuals mostly against the New Orthography of 1911.⁵

In 1923, diplomatic efforts were started for a Luso-Brazilian dialogue, and the subsequent changes in the Brazilian political scene prompted ABL to sign a minor agreement with ACL in 1931 (Houaiss, in Augusto, 1992b; Bueno, 1967). Even though the 1931 Agreement was turned into law in both countries, "nobody seems to have taken it very seriously" (I. Castro, 1987:XI). In Portugal, it did not include items suppressing the silent consonants (see section below). In Brazil, the Agreement was promulgated twice (1931 and 1933), suspended in 1934, and reestablished in 1938 (Castro, et al., 1987).

The 1940s brought the "editorial war between the *Vocabulários Ortográficos*" (I. Castro, 1987:XI), when the two Academies published their two independent and slightly

discrepant orthographic manuals (ACL's *Vocabulário Ortográfico* in 1940; ABL's *Pequeno Vocabulário Ortográfico* in 1943). According to Bueno, in Brazil "neither the government offices nor the press took any notice of these documents" (1967:278). However, the orthographic debate soon resumed. It was fueled initially by the Brazilian government's mandate that all official documents be written according to the 1931 Agreement, and later by the ABL attempt to produce a joint *Vocabulário Ortográfico* with the Portuguese Academy, which resulted in the new (and to this date controversial) Spelling Reform of 1945.

This Bilateral Agreement of 1945 is the crux of the present call for the unification. Drafted in Lisbon by representatives from the two Academies, it was promulgated by the Portuguese government after some debate. In Brazil, the public outcry against it was such that it was never approved by the legislative body at the time. Apparently the main reason for the negative reaction was the unilateral rules on the use of accents based on European Portuguese pronunciation (Freeman, 1965:115; Castro, et al., 1987:213).

The 1943 Norm set by ABL's *Pequeno Vocabulário Ortográfico* became the Brazilian orthographic norm, in effect to this day. In Portugal, the official orthography in effect has been the one set by the 1945 Reform, ironically called the Bilateral Agreement. Thus Portuguese had two official standard orthographies. The Brazilian norm was simplified in a law of 1971, and has remained unchanged since then. The Portuguese norm was also slightly altered in 1973 (I. Castro, 1987:XIII).

Reunification efforts have periodically been made. In 1967, a group of Portuguese and Brazilian scholars met in vain to draft a project for unification. In another attempt in 1975, a proposal was drawn up but it was short-lived due to the political scenario: Brazil had a rightist military government; Portugal had just gotten rid of its fascist dictatorship through a leftist revolution in 1974. 1975 was also the year the PALOP became independent.

In 1986, representatives of all seven Lusophone countries were called for a meeting at ABL in Rio de Janeiro to reform and unify the orthographic standards of the community. The resulting document—"Analytical Bases of the Simplified Orthography of the Portuguese Language in 1945, Renegotiated in 1975 and Consolidated in 1986"—came to be known as the Orthographic Accord (R. Castro, 1987).

The 1986 Project was polemic in Portugal. The generally negative evaluation called for a revision of a number of its items. According to Houaiss, it "was considered too extreme....The strong opposition that it generated, especially in Portugal, was responsible for the failure of this agreement" (1991:14). Evaluating the 1986 Project, I.

Castro says it is both extremely conservative, since it kept the outdated bases of 1945, and revolutionary for its radical, amateurish simplifications (1987:XIII).

In 1988, ACL produced a revised version of the 1986 Project. By then the Portuguese government had set up its own counseling body of language experts, the National Council for the Portuguese Language (CNALP), which was officially called upon to analyze the 1988 Project. In June 1989, the committee issued a report pointing out shortcomings in the 1988 Project and recommending that it be accepted only after changes (CNALP, 1990). The negative report was not well received by the government, which then excluded its own CNALP from the debate (Guerreiro, 1991c).

In October 1990, the same group of representatives that drafted the 1986 Project met again to agree on a revised version of the 1986 and 1988 Projects, incorporating some of the suggestions in the CNALP report. The resulting document is the 1990 Accord—the focus of the present debate. Despite strong opposition from some groups, the Portuguese government approved the Accord, which has yet to be voted upon by the Brazilian Congress.

Political and economic instability in Brazil has prevented Congress from examining the Accord so far. In fact, it is reported that its defenders prefer that the agreement be examined after public outrage against the recent diplomatic problems between Brazil and Portugal over immigration⁶ dies down (Hidalgo, 1993). In April 1993, a national conference of teachers and media professionals was held to discuss the Accord (*A unificação em debate*, 1993), but in general the orthographic debate seems to be muffled.

The 1990 Orthographic Accord

The Accord was signed on December 16, 1990, by representatives of the governments of all seven Portuguese-speaking countries and observers from Galicia. It is organized in 21 *bases*, or sections. Despite all the debate about the agreement (to be discussed below), the changes it proposes are relatively few, so that it qualifies as a minor spelling reform.

Some have ventured to actually quantify the extent of innovation that the 1990 Orthographic Accord wants to bring to the two official standards it aims at superseding. Couri (1992) says it affects "fewer than three thousand, or 1.98% of the 110 thousand most usual words of the Portuguese language." According to her sources, fewer than 600 words would have two spellings according to the unified orthography. Rattner (1992), citing sources from the Portuguese Academy (ACL), reports that the

Orthographic Accord would affect 1.6% of the words spelled in the Portuguese norm, 0.45 of the words in the Brazilian norm. Finally, Augusto (1992a) cites Houaiss as saying that Brazilians would have to spell 3% of their words differently according to the 1990 Accord—the Portuguese, 4%. As can be seen, the numbers vary and the criteria are never explicit, reflecting the emotional tone of the debate.

The Accord has three types of concerns. It regulates certain aspects already in use but which had not been specifically mentioned in previous orthographies. It introduces a series of "double orthographic standards," i.e., it makes it a rule that two spellings are acceptable for the same word depending on which "cultivated spoken norm" is represented (Portuguese or Brazilian). Finally, it introduces a few actual changes in spelling.⁷

The main spelling changes introduced have to do with the use of diacritics, or accents, the hyphen, and the silent consonants still spelled in European Portuguese (but deleted in Brazilian Portuguese).

In terms of the accents, there are two types of changes. On the one hand, the Accord eliminates the accents in three different types of vowel clusters presently used only in the Brazilian orthography, and reduces the number of obligatory differential accents to only one (*pode, pôde*). On the other hand, it sets optional spellings for words which are pronounced differently in Brazil and in Portugal (*gênero/género, Antônio/António*), or distinguished only in Portugal (*amámos, past/amamos, present*).

The use of the hyphen is regulated in a rather convoluted way, so that words that are presently hyphenated drop their hyphens, and vice-versa. These rules involve potential subjectivities such as not using a hyphen in compound words in which the notion of composition has been lost. There are also a number of exceptions.

The rules regarding the postvocalic silent consonants are the ones that affect the Portuguese the most. The Accord makes pronunciation a rule. The Brazilian official orthography (1943) does not have silent postvocalic consonants, so it does not have to change. However, the Portuguese presently spell a number of consonants which are not pronounced (the first in these clusters: *cc, cç, ct, pc, pç, and pt*). To make things more interesting, Brazilians do pronounce a few of these consonants where the Portuguese do not. This turns out to be an important issue for the debaters of the Orthographic Accord, especially in Portugal, and is discussed in further detailed below.

In addition to these, there are a few other minute changes limited to a few unusual contexts. Perhaps the most important of these is the elimination of one of the seven diacritics used in the Brazilian orthography, the umlaut or dieresis (*ü*).⁸

The Debate over the Orthographic Accord

In this section, I describe the arguments used by those who favor or oppose the Accord in various articles published in the Brazilian and in the Portuguese press. I do not claim this to be a comprehensive report, but rather a description of the range of arguments found in a small but hopefully representative sample of the debate. Most of the texts examined come from two series of articles published by the Portuguese newspaper *Expresso* in its magazine on June 1, 1991, and by the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* in a special section about the Accord published on January 24, 1993. A few other articles were also examined, most of them published in the Brazilian press in 1992.

The debate involves various groups: government agencies; educational associations; writers and journalists; language academies; the mass media; other specific groups; and public opinion (Geerts, van den Broeck & Verdoodt, 1977). The main identifiable government agency involved is the Portuguese CNALP, created in 1989 as a consulting body of language experts. The two language academies, ACL and ABL, figure prominently in the debate as the sponsors of unification. In addition to these groups, a few individuals are especially important.

The main proponent of the Accord in Brazil is Antônio Houaiss, a renowned scholar known primarily as a philologist and translator. His commitment to language planning issues is not new. Besides being a champion of the Accord, he has written on the need for standardization and renovation of scientific terminology as necessary steps for Portuguese to maintain its status as a language of culture. An ABL "immortal," Houaiss is also a member of the Brazilian Socialist Party, having run for vice-president in the near-winning ticket in 1989. In 1991, Houaiss was nominated as the Minister of Culture, and in 1993 he left the ministry to represent Brazil in a U.N. organ.

The support of such high ranking officials for the Orthographic Accord in Brazil cannot be disregarded. In addition to Houaiss, supporters of the 1990 Accord include former President, José Sarney, and José Aparecido de Oliveira, former Minister of Culture and ambassador to Portugal. They are also the proponents of the creation of an Institute for the Portuguese Language, seen by some Portuguese as an effort to promote Brazilian linguistic hegemony in the Lusophone community. The importance of these sponsors of the Accord is indicated by the headlines of the Portuguese newspaper *O Semanário* when announcing the nominations of Houaiss as Minister of Culture, "The Orthographic Accord is in Power," and of Aparecido de Oliveira as

ambassador in Portugal, "And the Institute for the Portuguese Language comes to Lisbon" (reported by Couri, 1992).

On the Portuguese side, the main supporter of the Accord seems to be the Minister of Culture, Pedro Santana Lopes, accused of neglecting CNALP's urging for further studies and modifications before the 1988 Project was approved and also of promoting a rush for the approval of the 1990 Accord in the Portuguese parliament (Guerreiro, 1991c). In addition to Lopes, the Portuguese President, Mário Soares, also favors the Accord.

These powerful debaters favor the Accord and back up the official discourse in its text. Critics of the Accord argue that they have personal interests in the implementation of the orthographic unification. Both positions are discussed in the next section.

The Positions in the General Debate

The opinions about the Accord can roughly be divided into two main camps: those who feel a unification accord is not necessary, and those who feel it is desirable.

According to the view that a single orthographic standard is unnecessary, there is no good reason to worry about changing or unifying the orthographies of Portuguese. Most of those in this camp do not question the official objectives of the Accord. Some (such as A. Renault, an ABL member, cited in Piza, 1992) call the whole thing nonsense. Others, however, highlight what they believe are more important issues, such as education of the people, literacy campaigns, or the standardization of technical vocabulary. Santos (1993) states that the allocation of resources to the Accord diverts attention from the true pressing needs of Brazil in terms of culture and education.

Roberto Cardoso Alves, the Brazilian representative who heads the committee examining the issue in Congress, is one of the few critics of the Accord who actually refers to the official objectives of the unification (Nogueira, 1992). Alves does not think that "an agreement is essential to promote the culture and the language." However, he adds that, despite his personal opinion against the Accord, he would recommend it for approval "in deference to" his friend José Aparecido de Oliveira.

Another group of debaters in this camp points to the uselessness of the Accord because, as they argue, the fact of the matter is that there are two languages involved, and that no unification reform or agreement can change this fact. They are not saying the Accord is not desirable, but that it is impossible.

In the other camp, there is a much more visible contingent of debaters. The common thread among them is the desire to have one single spelling for the entire

Lusophone community. Their views of the ways to attain this ideal differ substantially. Those concerned with reaching some unification agreement once and for all defend the Accord as it is. Others argue the 1990 Accord is too defective to qualify as a definitive solution to the orthographic quest, a position summarized in the title of an article in the Portuguese press (Guerreiro, 1991a:76-R): "From desired accord to the undesirable Accord."

Both these views are supported by various arguments discussed below. Meanwhile, a few take a position without discussing the merits or shortcomings of the Accord. José Saramago, probably the most widely read Portuguese writer in Brazil, simply says an Accord is necessary (Couri, 1992). His position is symptomatic of the entire debate, especially in light of his request that his books be published in Brazil in the Portuguese orthography. Another case in point—now from those who oppose the Accord because of its political rather than theoretical or scientific criteria—is that of University of Lisbon linguist Maria H. Mira Mateus, who refused to make further comments on the matter after the Portuguese government disregarded the recommendations made by its own body of language experts (CNALP, 1990; Guerreiro 1991c).

A common charge against the format of the Accord is that the drafting of the document was authoritarian and unprofessional (Belard, 1991; Prieto, 1992; Piza, 1992; Cagliari, 1993). Some resent the limited debate before its approval by the Portuguese government; others call for further debate in Brazil before Congress votes the Accord bill.

Finally, some opponents of the Accord suggest that a reasonable solution to the "orthographic quest" would be the mutual official recognition of both standards. This suggestion is never addressed by the proponents of the Accord in the documents examined.

The Official Discourse and the Voices of Opposition

The official discourse regarding the Accord, namely that of the drafters of the text, the two language Academies and the Portuguese government, is that a unified standard for Portuguese orthography would bring more prestige to the language and to the Lusophone community internationally (Houaiss, 1991; Riding, 1991; Couri, 1992; Houaiss, 1993). Silva and Gunnewiek summarize the strong version:

The orthographic unification which is being pursued attempts among other things to facilitate the use of the Portuguese language in international organizations such as OAU, OAS, etc., and to liberate them from the

diplomatically painful choice between the two official orthographies presently used (1992:75).

Less grandiose versions of the argument claim that Portuguese is the only language of culture with two official orthographies,⁹ and that this must be corrected "to strengthen the Portuguese language" (Málaca Casteleiro, Portuguese philologist, in Couri, 1992), and "to avoid the disintegration of the language" (Houaiss, 1991:15).

Most opponents do not question these arguments and only criticize the Accord as a bad solution to the unification question. The 1989 report issued by Portuguese language experts on the 1988 Project (CNALP, 1990) rejected it as was, but echoed the present Accord's premises that "the coexistence of two official orthographies hurt the intercontinental unity of Portuguese and its prestige in the world" (CNALP, 1990:69).

Among the opinions examined, a rare example of a critic who does refer specifically to the official discourse supporting the Accord is a Portuguese journalist (Belard, 1991). He does not question that grand objective, but reinforces it by asserting that the Portuguese norm should be the one used by the UN, since in his view,

what makes Portuguese deserve a new status in international organizations is not the fact that there are another 20 or 50 million Brazilians, but the emergence in 1975 of five new sovereign states that have it as their official language.

While most of these critics do not embrace the cause of unification openly either, there is hardly any questioning of the official agenda, and there seems to be a tacit (perhaps unconscious) agreement among debaters that Portuguese really needs a unified orthography. Exceptions are found in the latest opinions collected. Brazilian grammarian Gama Kury, arguing against the Accord said: "It would be a merely political agreement, not a linguistic one" (in Hidalgo, 1993). A Brazilian professor of Portuguese also refers to the Accord as "above all else, a political question" (Santos, 1993).

Thus the ensuing debate involves two different frames of reference: The drafters of the Accord and most of those who favor it have the necessity of a unification as their primary concern. The ones who would like an Accord on particular grounds—linguistic, scientific, educational, or editorial efficiency—have those particular grounds as their primary concerns. Most language experts take this stance. The debaters therefore have incompatible agendas. Portuguese linguist Mira Mateus' decision to withdraw from the debate makes sense in this context since she sees no role for her purely scientific expertise in discussions with powerholders concerned with political efficiency.