Arguments

A Similar Debate

Geerts, et al.'s (1977) analysis of a similar debate over the Spelling Reform of Dutch-Flemish that unified the orthographies used in the Netherlands and Belgium guided my initial analysis of the arguments used in the Luso-Brazilian case. In fact, a remarkable similarity can be found between the types of arguments used in the two cases. The fact that both situations involve polycentric standard languages (Stewart, 1968), i.e., two variants of the same standard language,[10] seems to account for the similarity of arguments displayed.

There are, however, three great differences between the two cases. First, the Dutch-Flemish case involves two nations with contiguous territory, whereas in the Luso-Brazilian case the two nations are located in different continents and hemispheres. The second difference has to do with the status of the polycentric standard: In the Dutch-Flemish case, the orthographic norms codify the literary standard superimposed on the speakers' regional dialects, with little concern for the role of one of the centers in the unified standard. In the Luso-Brazilian debate, however, there are no regional dialects to speak of, and the concern for not letting "the other" standard prevail is great. A third difference is that the relationship between Belgium and the Netherlands involves no colonial history.

These differences are reflected in my discussion of the debate. Issues and arguments were similar in both cases, but did not always coincide, as the table below illustrates (Figure 1).

The Habituation Argument.

According to Geerts, et al., those who use this argument say that "one is accustomed to a certain spelling and, however inconsequent this may be, it will always take some time to get used to a reform and hence one would rather stick to the status quo" (1977:202). In opposition, there are those who say: "It is simply a matter of time. After a while one gets used to the new spelling and soon forgets the old" (Geerts, et al., 1977: 202). In the Luso-Brazilian debate, we find a synthetic version of the argument, expressed by the Portuguese President, Mário Soares: "We must evolve" (in Couri, 1992).

Figure 1

	Arguments listed in Geerts, et al. (1977) in the debate of the Dutch Spelling Reform	Similar arguments in the Luso-Brazilian debate of the 1990 Orthographic Accord
1	Habituation	Habituation
2	Esthetic	Esthetic
3	Corruption	(insignificant)
4	Laziness	(non-existent)
5	Frequent change	Frequent change
6	Surrounding cultures	Tradition
7	Older culture	Tradition
8	Homograph	Tradition
9	Financial	Editorial
10	Etymological	Tradition
11	Word image	Instruction/Habituation
12	Instruction	Instruction
13	Social	(non-existent)
14	Revolution	(non-existent)
15	Dialect	(non-existent)
16	Prestige	Official
17	Encouragement/Discouragement	Instruction

The Esthetic Argument

Geerts, et al.'s *esthetic argument* (1977) appears in a subdued form within the Luso-Brazilian context, but it seems to have been a prominent one in the debate that rejected the 1986 Project. In fact, many of the opinions quoted in the press resound from that earlier debate, and refer to items which have been dropped in the 1990 Accord. Two examples of words "made ugly," *super-homem* and *bem-me-quer* becoming *superomem* and *bemequer*, are often cited, even though the words are no longer affected by the 1990 Accord.

The Frequent Change Argument

This is a recurring argument in the Luso-Brazilian debate, with a more comprehensive reach than described for the Dutch-Flemish discussion. Geerts, et al. gloss it as: "This is the hundredth change in a relatively short time. Can't we finally stop

making fools of ourselves" (1977:203). Although this is said often unreflectedly by those who dismiss the Accord as unnecessary, some critics also come up with theoretical support for it. A Brazilian applied linguist (Cagliari, 1993) argues that in terms of literacy the less an orthography is changed, the more valuable it is. Some Portuguese critics refer to the fact that the Accord will "reinforce the orthographic instability" of the language (Belard, 1991). Aguiar e Silva, the former coordinator of the Portuguese government's counseling commission on language (CNALP), is quoted as saying the Accord will disrupt the accepted Portuguese norm in the EEC and in the PALOP.

Of course, the counter arguement is that unification must come now, or it will be impossible in the future. Also, some say that there have been so many changes in the past without casualties, that this time it won't be worse. This is an implicit argument in the discourse of those whose concern is that there be an orthographic unification.

The Financial/editorial Argument

The *financial argument* as presented by Geerts, et al. (1977) is a major one in the Luso-Brazilian debate. It states: "Each spelling reform requires respelling and reprinting of many books and this is too expensive" (p. 204). In the Luso-Brazilian debate the argument takes various forms, and it might be better to refer to it as the *editorial argument*.

Houaiss (in Couri, 1992) sees the Accord as beneficial to the global Lusophone readership because it will enable the circulation of books which, according to him, are currently restricted to a single orthographic jurisdiction. Inês Duarte, a linguist at the University of Lisbon, argues that it is exactly "this fallacy" that makes the Accord "something similar to the emperor's new clothes." According to her, co-editions will not be possible because the Accord, by allowing for optional spellings, is in fact keeping the problem which prevented co-editions from being produced: the two standard orthographies.

In more clearly financial terms, there are critics who say that the Accord is the result of special-interest groups and individuals intending to reap profits from the publication of dictionaries, grammarbooks and manuals, since all present materials will be made obsolete. This opinion is expressed most directly by a professor at the University of Lisbon, president of the Movement Against the Orthographic Accord (Prieto, 1992). The Brazilian deputy in charge of examining the Accord in Congress has said "there are many commercial interests [behind the Accord], interests in new editions of grammarbooks, dictionaries, elementary school textbooks" (Nogueira, 1992).

Another twist of this argument is that the Brazilian publishing houses, believed to be more aggressive than the Portuguese, are interested in expanding their markets to Portugal and into the potentially lucrative PALOP school textbook business (Riding, 1991; Neves, 1991; Santos, 1993). As Cooper points out, "variability in written forms also imposes a problem upon printers and publishers, who seek as broad a market as possible for their texts . The larger the population that shares a linguistic norm, the larger the publisher's market."(1989:137) At least one Brazilian publisher, Arthur Nestrovski, validates this view, in spite of his position against the Accord (Piza, 1992). The editorial director of the largest Brazilian publishing house specializing in didactic materials, José B. Duarte, who favors the Accord, denies the charges on the basis that the Portuguese editorial market is very solid (Piza, 1992).

Interestingly enough, some critics of the Accord are the publishers who use the same *financial argument* to say that the cost of having to redo the typesetting of their collections would be huge and would jeopardize the publication of important titles now available (Piza, 1992). This turn of the argument is mentioned in Portugal as well (Neves, 1991; Pedrosa, 1991). The CNALP report against the 1988 Project also discusses the editorial argument at some length (CNALP, 1990:75-76).

The strong version of this argument develops into concerns for the real interests of some of the champions of the Unification Accord. Prieto, for instance, actually accuses Houaiss, the main proponent of the Accord in Brazil, of being interested in turning his own dictionary (under preparation) into a best-seller (Rattner, 1992).

This raises questions about the role of the language planner in the implementation of the orthographic unification. Cooper observes that in standardization efforts, language is often used as "a rallying point for the formation of national consciousness, but those who promote the language also promote themselves as a protoelite who will come to power with the political apparatus they create" (1989:69). In the light of these words, we can find some resonance to Prieto's otherwise unfounded accusations, especially when the official agenda of supranational integration and the positions held by its champions come to mind.

The Instruction Argument

Whereas in the Dutch-Flemish spelling reform this argument had to do with the dis/advantages of a simplified orthography for the children who must learn it, in the Luso-Brazilian debate the instructional consequences of the Accord are referred to within the discussion of other arguments. It is present in the *editorial argument*, since it is said that the Brazilian publishers want to dominate the PALOP textbook market, which

would mean that those countries would actually witness a spelling reform (going from the Portuguese to the Brazilian norms within the "optional norms" in the Accord). There is also concern for the state of confusion that might result from these "optional norms."

Geerts, et al. also refer to an *encouragement/discouragement argument* used mainly by Belgians in the case of Dutch-Flemish unification. According to the critics, changes in the spelling would discourage non-native speakers from learning the language. Those defending the changes argue that the simplifications would actually encourage them to learn it. This two-way argument seems to be part of the larger *instruction argument* in the Luso-Brazilian debate, the non-native speakers being mainly the PALOP populations.

Another issue (treated separately by Geerts, et al. [1977] but which seems to fall under the *instruction argument* in the present debate) is the *word-image argument*, or the different views regarding the connection of language and spelling and the consequences of that to literacy practices (Cagliari, 1993; Guerreiro, 1991b:76-R). Geerts, et al. (1977) point out that this is also a part of the *habituation argument*.

The Portuguese "Silent Consonants" Issue

As was said above, one of the reformations of the spelling proposed in the Accord is the suppression of some post-vocalic consonant letters spelled but not pronounced in Portugal. To the Brazilians, who spell only the ones they actually pronounce, this seems straightforward enough as a positive simplification for the Portuguese. For the Portuguese, however, these consonant letters are important for a number of reasons, mainly that they mark the quality of the preceding vowel as a full-vowel and not a schwa (e.g., *recepção, recessão*, the *p* is never pronounced, but the second *e* will be pronounced /e/ and /ɔ/ respectively; in Brazil both *e*'s are pronounced /e/ and the *p* , in this particular word, is pronounced). This issue is not new,[11] and it lies at the base of the next arguments.

The Tradition Argument

Here I consolidate three arguments treated separately in the discussion of the Dutch-Flemish debate into one. The *surrounding cultures argument* and the *older culture argument* say that the more phonetic and less etymological spelling breaks the links with the spellings of other European languages (namely French and German) and with the culture of the past (the [pseudo-]etymological phase of Portuguese spelling). Both are voiced often in Portugal but rarely heard in Brazil. The head of the Portuguese Literary Circle (cited in Riding, 1991) calls the Accord "an offense to history." The

Portuguese philologist Lindley Cintra, one of the drafters of the Accord, concedes to this argument but explains that Portugal lacks the political clout to be able to produce a unified orthography for the Lusophone world and still keep the etymological spellings.

A third facet is the *homograph argument* in Geerts, et al. (1977). It maintains that the spelling reform will produce homographs, increasing the potential of misunderstandings. This is occasionally heard in the discussion of the consonants to be suppressed in Portugal.

The Pronunciation Argument

This argument also follows from the silent consonant issue in Portugal, and its logic will not be clear to a Brazilian without explanation. According to some Portuguese purists, the new spelling will affect the pronunciation of the vowel preceding the consonant to be eliminated. They fear that people will soon mispronounce those words, since they will miss the vowel-quality indicator. This is perhaps the most outlandish of the arguments in terms of modern linguistic and sociolinguistic theory. In his analysis of the debate of the 1986 Project, R. Castro discusses similar veins of "linguistic myths" (1987:119).

Ferguson refers to "the folk belief that the written language is the 'real' language and that the speech is a corruption of it." He points out that the currency of this belief plays a role in limiting "the conscious intervention in the form of language planning that the community will conceive of or accept" (1968:30).

What seems to be at stake, however, is an emotional attachment to these spellings on the part of the Portuguese, revealing an embedded argument not found in the Dutch-Flemish debate, where there is no concern regarding the prevalence of one standard over the other. I call this the *rejection of the Brazilianization argument*. This strong argument has been in the making in Portugal for some time, and actually develops into a number of corollaries. The Portuguese linguist R. Castro (1987:118), writing about the disclosure of the 1986 Project, identified four different types of reactions to the Project among educated Portuguese writing in the press. These reactions voice concerns other than those specifically linguistic. The geopolitical type of reaction focused on the consequences of the Accord to the definition of the areas of political and economic influence of Brazil and Portugal. The geocultural reactions were concerned with the policies of cultural influence within and without the Lusophone community. Ideological reactions were marked by nationalistic and xenophobic components. Finally, those of a methodological type were concerned with the management of the process that led to the Accord.

Rejection of the Brazilianization Argument

Few of the Portuguese critics of the Accord go on record, but the journalists writing about the debate, Riding (1991), Couri (1992) and Ascher (1993) refer to the Portuguese fear of the preponderance of Brazilian norms. C. F. Alves, a Portuguese journalist cited in an article by a Brazilian correspondent in Lisbon, is explicit: "We, the Portuguese, react because we are the most harmed: now we'll have a Portuguese that is badly written and badly spoken as the one in the *novelas*" (Couri, 1992), referring to the popular Brazilian programs broadcast on Portuguese television.

As a rare PALOP voice in the debate, Cape Verdean linguist Manuel Veiga (in Neves, 1991) sees no preference for either standard in the Accord. The official CNALP report (CNALP, 1990:77) refers to the Brazilian hegemonic interests in the creation of a Portuguese Language Institute headed by Brazilian senior politicians.

The Optionality Issue

This issue is generated by the very text of the Accord, which allows words to have (optionally) variant spellings in Brazil or Portugal. Most of these words are affected by the silent consonant issue, or are to be spelled optionally with the acute or circumflex accents (é, ó or ê, ô) according to the different national pronunciation. Critics charge that this will create an orthographic chaos, especially in the few cases where regional pronunciations would trigger two optional spellings for the same word within the same country.

The real point of this argument seems to be that the predicted optionality issue raises doubts about what an orthography is. If an orthography is a set of rules, and if the problem that the Accord tries to solve is the double official orthographic standard, producing rules stating optional spellings is a serious internal contradiction. One again is reminded of the suggestion of mutual official recognition of the two orthographies.

This issue is indicative of the incompatible frames of reference which guide the different debaters. Those who defend the Accord as it is, and who implicitly espouse the view that a unification must be reached now, argue that the 1990 Accord is the only possible political compromise at this point. Those who would prefer a more careful unification agreement want a unification that is scientifically sound as well as politically possible.

Conclusion

The debate over the orthographic unification Accord for the Lusophone world reveals a community that is ambivalent about its status, oscillating between a nostalgic

and self-aggrandizing drive to unity, and a more realistic concern with conflicting interests over limited resources that restricts integration. The latest diplomatic clashes between Portugal and Brazil over immigration, for example, expose the ugly aspect of the preponderance of pragmatic considerations of a political and economic sort over the emotional considerations about cultural or linguistic commonalty. Italo Zappa, a retired Brazilian diplomat, referring to the immigration matter, could well be warning about the orthographic debate: "Portugal is a foreign country and not an extension of Brazil in Europe, as some people tend to believe on the basis of sentimentalism. It has its own interests and it is only natural that it should try to defend them" (Gryzinski, 1993).

As the post-modern world loses its single hegemonic centers, and nations rearrange their alliances, it is inevitable that the Luso-Brazilian "special relation" (Riding, 1991) also change. The debate fails to discuss this directly, either because debaters do not want to face facts (sentimentalism), or because it is ideologically less complex to refer to "cultural integration" than it is to address issues in terms of politics and economics.

In addition, the general discourse of the debate has two different referents, depending on the purposes attached to the Accord by the debaters. The fact that the debate goes on as if the participants were all referring to the same purposes gives it a certain psychotic air that is at times ridiculous and at times irritating.

Cooper points out that the language resulting from corpus renovation "fulfills no new communicative functions (1989:154). But if the new forms carry out old communicative functions, they also contribute to the nonlinguistic goals which motivated the linguistic renovation." It is thus both comprehensible and perfectly legitimate that the Accord should be driven by the political wishes of the two Lusophone nations to have a unified orthography that will allow them to claim a more tangible (economic and political) status for their (variety of the) language. Yet, if we look at the official discourse candidly, it looks as if the fuel moving the unification impetus is the obstinate idealism of those who believe that the double orthographic standard prevents Portuguese from assuming the more prestigious role in international communication and in Western culture that it righteously deserves. This, however, is hard to maintain after a careful analysis of the debate, as it is also hard to ignore that the unification would naturally yield personal and political prestige to those who help achieve it.

In spite of that, the Accord merits recognition as a successful political and diplomatic achievement. It manages to unify the orthography in two countries that shared a common past, but that inevitably have different futures. In another vein, we can say, tongue in cheek, that the Accord has a noble diplomatic goal supported by powerful

sponsors and interests both in Brazil and in Portugal. The 1990 Accord is thus a success if taken on the terms of its official discourse, but it attains this success at the expense of linguistic efficiency. To the chagrin of those who would like to see an orthographic unification based on linguistic criteria, it seems that the 1990 Accord is the only possible unification document that can be drafted by the two Lusophone nations at this point.

As Portugal reacted chauvinistically to defend its tradition, its nostalgic past, against carelessly sprawling Brazil, the urge to produce a unification Accord at all costs overruled most concerns with linguistic efficiency. The result is that the official argument is weak in the face of the needs of the community of users of the language, as there are few objective linguistic reasons to favor the Accord as it is. Unfortunately, it is issues of linguistic efficiency—not high on the sponsors' agenda—that the most earnest opponents of the orthographic unification cling to.

Among the various testimonies and opinions reviewed in this report, two seem to be especially telling summaries. The first is the paradoxical statement by the Brazilian congressman who heads the committee examining the Accord, who sees no real purpose in it, but who nevertheless says he will recommend it since his friend, the present Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs, wants it. The other is the statement by a Brazilian journalist at the opening of this paper: "Portugal and Brazil are staging a deaf war over a language that the world ignores even in its best literary forms" (Ascher, 1993).

Finally, the case of corpus renovation discussed here is indicative of the extent to which language planning is a political and ideological practice rather than a purely linguistic enterprise. The Luso-Brazilian Orthographic Accord for the Lusophone Community and the debate around it exemplify both the complexity of the forces that operate in language planning and the lack of clarity among language experts and users regarding what the activity is all about. It thus renders the academic knowledge about language planning an invaluable asset for language experts, which at present (at least in the Luso-Brazilian context) is not made use of in a systematic way.[12]

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[1] Macedo (1983) and Freire & Macedo(1987) advocate the use of Creole as essential for the success of literacy campaigns in Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

[2] The quotations from original Portuguese language sources appearing in this paper were translated into English by the author.

[3] Four main African languages are spoken in Angola, eight in Mozambique.

[4] I refer to spelling norms in opposition to orthography to make clear that an orthography is a set of spelling regulations that has been officially agreed upon.

5 The 1920's witnessed great transformations in Brazil, especially in the arts, emphasizing the definition of what was genuinely Brazilian and not simply transplanted European.

6 Reciprocal laws grant Brazilian and Portuguese citizens special immigration status. Due to Portugal's EEC membership and the increasing number of Brazilians entering the country to work, callings for revisions of such reciprocities have been heard in both countries.

7 For the complete official text of the 1990 Accord, see Houaiss, 1991:58-93.

8 In a recent example of the role of the press in the implementation of spelling changes, the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* quietly stopped using this diacritic.

9 To those who point out the case of English as a counter-example, Houaiss (1993) explains that the English "graphic variants" do not constitute separate orthographies. The CNALP report on the 1988 Project also dismisses the English counterexample (CNALP, 1990:70). Though it is true that the Portuguese orthographies, unlike British and American spelling conventions, are official standards based on laws, the differences can be argued to be equivalent. In fact, Cagliari (1993) argues that the differences between the Brazilian and the Portuguese orthographies are negligible as far as reading is concerned.

10 Stewart refers to the case of European and Brazilian Portuguese as an example of polycentric standardization, and to Dutch as an example of monocentric standardization. However, it is clear that in terms of orthography, Dutch (in the Netherlands) and Flemish (in Belgium) did have "a different set of norms exist[ing] simultaneously," as the call for a Spelling Reform to unify the two standards seems to prove (1967:534).

[11] The 1931 Luso-Brazilian Orthographic Agreement suppressed those consonants, but the Portuguese law promulgating the Agreement "suppressed" that item.

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