Historiography of Linguistics: Themes, History and Traditions

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The scientific study of language (Faraco, 2017, p. 13), like any other branch of knowledge, has its history. Linguistics, as we know it, can be considered a relatively recent discipline. However, there is evidence of linguistic reflections as old as humanity itself. Thus, if we go back a few millennia in history, we come across the creation of the first writing systems and vocabularies of foreign languages, both motivated by practical needs and bear witness to the first signs of reflections on the nature of language (Fischer, 2009). With the advent of the first Greek philosophical schools, many linguistic observations began to be accumulated (Neves, 1987). To account for these data, the first systematizations and categorizations of a logical-philosophical nature emerged, giving rise to the word classes of the grammatical tradition (Dezotti, 2013). The ancient Greeks also initiated semantic discussions about the nature of language and were interested in the morphological and syntactical aspects of their own language and dialects. At the culmination of these studies, in the second century BC, the work considered to be the first grammar appeared in Alexandria, Egypt: the *Tékhne grammatiké*, by Dionysius of Thrace (Chapanski, 2003). In the East, contemporaneously with the Greeks, the great civilization of India began to delve into the detailed research of speech sounds. The long history of human interest in language, multivariate and complex, continued into Late Antiquity, the High and Late Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Modern Age, the Age of Enlightenment, and has continued uninterrupted to the present day. It is a history as fundamental to understanding the world and human beings as the history of other sciences, the visual arts, politics, religion, music, and so many other fields of knowledge and culture. In the words of Robins (1983, p. 2), "today's linguistics, like other branches of knowledge and cultural facts in general, is at

the same time a product of its past and a matrix of its future [...]" and, "like any intellectual or moral conception," Linguistics "[...] has its history [...]," and its historical study is similar to "any other subject related to human activity," that is, "it consists of the study of the temporal succession of people and events, as well as the examination of the causal relationships, influences, and tendencies that can be discovered in them and that enable us to better understand them" (Robins, 1983, p. 2).

Since the 1970s, Linguistic Historiography (hereinafter HL) has emerged as an alternative approach to studying the history of linguistics. It differs from previous approaches primarily by abandoning a cumulative understanding of linguistic knowledge. HL presents segments of the history of human reflections on language as integral parts of the discipline and proposes well-established theoretical and methodological principles for its research (Coelho; Hackerott, 2012). It is, therefore, a set of linguistically informed and epistemologically oriented reconstructions of segments of the history of linguistics. Its orientations stem from developments in the ideas of theorists in the History and Philosophy of Science, especially Thomas Kuhn (2006 [1962]), who in his work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* inaugurated the possibility of critical historiographies for the history of science. Theorists such as Koerner (1989), Auroux (2006 [1992]), Murray (1998), and Swiggers (2004), operating calibrations, ruptures and broad developments, adapted Kuhn's ideas for the History of Science to the environment of Linguistics.

In Brazil, especially until the 1980s and mid-1990s, the work of reconstructing segments of the history of language studies was limited to what Castilho calls "chronicles that sought to document what was being done in Brazil in the areas of Philology, Grammar, and Linguistics" (2018, p. 33)[1]. However, this situation changed with the founding by Cristina Altman of the Documentation Center in Historiography of Linguistics – Centro de Documentação em Historiografia da Linguística (CEDOCH-DL-USP) within the Department of Linguistics at the University of São Paulo in 1994. This center began to house a series of interrelated research projects, events, exhibitions, seminars and scientific publications based on a common set of methodological principles. Cristina Altman, "along with Olga Coelho and several other graduate students, established a vast program on the emergence, development, institutionalization, and professionalization of language sciences throughout a research tradition" (Castilho, 2018, p. 34), which included inaugural studies of the first grammars of American languages written

1 Castilho (2018, p. 33) cites as chroniclers of Linguistics "Preti (1981, 1987), Cunha (1985), Callou (1999), Dias and Moraes (1994), Salles (2001) [...] Castilho (1967, 1971a, 1971b, 1972-1973, 1981a, 1981b, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1994, 1995, 2000, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2017a, b)"

in the territory of present-day Brazil by Jesuit missionaries in the 16th century. Cristina Altman also introduced both Missionary Linguistics and studies on past linguistic reflections on languages other than Portuguese that were spoken and taught in Brazil.

It is worth noting that the term "Linguistics" in Linguistic Historiography does not exclude language studies prior to the 20th century, as HL has as its scope all knowledge about language, which it seeks to describe and explain scientifically. In a chapter discussing the object, methodology, and modalization of HL, Swiggers (2012, p. 39) defines it as follows:

> the discipline (within the field of [general] linguistics) that aims at providing a scientifically grounded descriptive and explanatory account of how linguistic knowledge (i.e. what was accepted at a given time as knowledge, information and documentation on language-related issues) was gained, and what has been the course of development of this linguistic knowledge, since its beginnings to the present.

Given the research parameters of HL, nothing prevents us from studying the linguistic thought of, for example, the ancient Egyptians, the Roman grammarians, the *Modistae* of the Late Medieval period, or the *Minerva* of Sanctius de las Brozas from the late 16th century. Thus, HL research on topics such as the discussions on the nature of language in Plato's Cratylus, the debates of medieval grammarians that gave rise to the development of a theory of syntactic dependencies, the use of Aristotelian procedures and notions in the grammatical tradition up to the present day, etc. (many other examples could be cited). In this sense, there are good reasons to believe that HL can contribute significantly to the progress of Linguistics in Brazil and worldwide, for example, in the analysis of current theories and procedures that may inadvertently repeat discoveries or notions that were lost in the past.

We emphasize that the notions underlying the traditional grammatical explanations of linguistic phenomena, as found today in teaching materials used in our schools, can only be fully understood by considering the ideas that underpin these explanations. Indeed, it is possible to understand the rationale behind the operational concepts of Traditional Grammar without prior knowledge of their epistemological foundations. However, understanding them greatly illuminates the teaching of grammatical and linguistic theories, as much can be learned about the theoretical assumptions of current reflections on language if the centuries of research that preceded them are taken into account.

Thus far, our goal in this text has been to briefly introduce HL as a linguistic discipline, its introduction in Brazil, and, above all, the role played by CEDOCH in the foundation and consolidation of Brazilian linguistic historiography. Having done this, it is necessary to discuss the context in which the idea for this dossier arose.

Since 1999, CEDOCH has hosted the *MiniEnapol de HL*, a conference that brings together, in addition to its members (who are undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral students) also graduate students, researchers, and professors from other Brazilian and international universities. Beginning with the 2021 edition, due to pandemic restrictions, the conference became online. This format enabled CEDOCH to significantly expand its dialogue with an even wider circle of researchers, as there were no longer financial constraints, both institutional and individual, on invitations and travel for researchers to come to São Paulo. This edition enabled the creation of thematic panels with a wide range of topics, presented by researchers from various regions of Brazil and other countries, such as Argentina, Portugal, and the Netherlands. These authors were invited to submit their papers to this prestigious journal, which also received articles from the extensive open call. This dossier is made up of texts from these two sources, which also symbolizes Cristina Altman›s desire and constant actions since the beginning of CEDOCH, namely, the dissemination, expansion and consolidation of Brazilian Linguistic Historiography.

Thus, we present here to the interested reader 13 articles and a review, which are structured around three thematic axes: (i) Grammaticographies (of Portuguese, scholarly Spanish and Flemish); (ii) Historiography of European Linguistics; and (iii) Historiography of Brazilian Linguistics. The presentation of the texts will follow this order, beginning with those that deal with the grammaticography of a given language.

In *The sentence in nineteenth-century Brazilian grammar: a panoramic study*, Bruna Polachini, using a universe of 72 nineteenth-century grammars as a reference, examines how a concept so dear to Philosophical Grammar, the sentence (*oração*, *proposição*, *sentença*) is portrayed in this extensive corpus, observing similarities and differences in its status. In doing so, the author demonstrates that nineteenth-century Brazilian grammatical writing is fundamentally rationalist, as 52 works are linked to General Grammar, the rationalist model. However, the author manages to capture the presence of other epistemological models, identifying three grammars tied to the Latin syntactic model and another 17 in which a certain detachment from General

Grammar can be noted, as these works begin to use the Historical-Comparative grammatical model.

In the article *Pronominal Enclitic – Traces of a Controversy*, Marcelo Costa Sievers and Tania Maria Nunes de Lima Camara present the controversy between defenders of the Lusitanian and Brazilian usage related to pronoun collocations at the beginning of the 20th century; the authors demonstrate Cândido de Figueiredo's (1928 [1917]) opposition to what he calls nativism, which accepts the use of "forms of 'vulgar Brazilian' language" contrary to the usage of the former colonial metropolis as opposed to the position of Manuel Said Ali (1919 [1908]) and Evanildo Bechara (1969 [1961]), defenders of Brazilian usage, for whom purism does not stop change and variation.

In the text *The Concept of the Syllable in João de Barros (1540)*, Leonardo Ferreira Kaltner and Melyssa Cardozo Silva dos Santos demonstrate that the concept of syllable in the Portuguese language is fundamental to understanding Barros's prosody in his *Gramática da língua portuguesa* (1540). For the Renaissance grammarian, Portuguese differs from Greek and Latin in syllabic division and stress in speech but not in chant, and bears similarities to classical languages in syllabic quantity. The article also demonstrates that the study of the syllable in the 16th century was linked not only to grammar but also to chanting and music, in a tradition dating back to the Middle Ages and Antiquity.

In *Synchrony in Linguistic Historiography: Said Ali and the Linguistic Structuralism*, Cristina Altman questions the assertion made by some linguists and historiographers that Said Ali was a precursor of Structuralism in Brazil. The author argues that the fact that Ali, in 1919, mentioned Saussure in one of his works is not sufficient to associate him with this theory. To reject such a link, Cristina Altman argues that some methodological procedures important to HL were not followed. In addition to analyzing the case itself, the article presents important methodological reflections by the woman who introduced HL to Brazil, something the author frequently does in her written work and oral communications.

In his article *Logical and grammatical analysis and didactic renewal in Argentinean school grammar (1863-1884)*, Esteban Lidgett argues that the introduction of logical and grammatical analysis, an analytical practice derived from Philosophical Grammar, was responsible for overcoming old methods of rule memorization, typical of classical education, which had been increasingly criticized by Argentine secondary school teachers and administrators for generating little interest among students. The new method, double analysis,

was seen as a scientific form of language teaching and was responsible for increasing student interest, as it encouraged active participation during class.

In *Idel Becker in three phases: a comparative-historiographical study on his lexical approach to teaching Spanish to Brazilians*, Diego José Alves Alexandre examines Idel Becker's influence on teaching Spanish vocabulary to Brazilians over several decades, highlighting his emphasis on comparisons with Portuguese through different editions of his *Spanish Manual* and articles.

In the text *The Thesaurus Theutonicae linguae (1573): dictionary as a grammar*, Elizaveta Zimont argues for a greater consideration of dictionaries in the history of grammar, focusing on the *Thesaurus Theutonicae linguae* (TTL) of 1573, reconstructing the authors' assumptions about the grammatical structure of Flemish and the strategies adopted, based on labels and metalinguistic comments.

Moving on now to articles concerning the historiography of European Linguistics, we have *Shaping Comparative Linguistics: The Achievement of Franz Bopp*, by Pierre Swiggers, which focuses on Franz Bopp, considered one of the founders of Indo-European comparative grammar, exploring his theories on the origin and structure of grammatical forms and his analytical approach.

In *August Schleicher's reflections on the autonomy and complementarity of Linguistics and Philology*, Rogério Ferreira da Nóbrega analyzes August Schleicher's reflections, in the 19th century, on the distinction between Linguistics, which he conceives as a natural science of language, and Philology, which he sees as a historical science centered on cultural study through texts.

Closing the articles section, we have three historiographies on Brazilian Linguistics.

In *Formal Linguistics and Interdisciplinarity: historical and contemporary issues*, Olga Coelho discusses two approaches to Linguistics: the internalist (formal) and the externalist. The former is characterized by a greater concern with the analysis, systematization, and formalization of aspects of human language and languages, while the latter focuses more on dialogue with fields such as history, sociology, and education. The author argues that formal Linguistics, which has always defined itself as scientific, has long been unconcerned with a dialogue with informal linguists or even with other fields of knowledge. However, Coelho identifies a shift in this scenario, noting an interest among some formal linguists in making their voices heard outside their restricted field, as can be seen in

the recent interest in discussions about Portuguese teaching and also in the content of official documents regulating it, such as the BNCC.

In *Initial Reflections on Phonology in Construtural Grammar*, Gustavo Nishida analyzes the studies on phonetics and phonology found in the grammar by Eurico Back and Geraldo Mattos (1972), as well as Back's article published in the Construtura journal (1973), drawing attention to a forgotten, or at least largely overlooked chapter in the history of Brazilian linguistics. He proposes a contrastive study of nasal vowels in Brazilian Portuguese from the perspective of Construtural Linguistics (CL) and the approach of Câmara Júnior (1969). The author notes a lack of references to the construtural proposal and, at the same time, observes that Mattos's analysis served as the starting point for Brazilian phonetic and phonological studies in the following decades.

The article *Trends in Critical Discourse Analysis in Latin America*, by Anielle Morais, presents the theoretical trajectory of British researcher Norman Fairclough (1941) in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It offers a historiographical study from the perspective of the reorganization of Fairclough's theoretical project, which shifted from a linguistic analysis perspective until the 1980s to a more social analysis from the 1990s onward. The article discusses how this shift impacted critical-discursive research produced in Latin America. To demonstrate this impact, it offers a discussion of recent work by two Latin American specialists: María Laura Pardo and Izabel Magalhães.

Finally, to conclude HL's thematic dossier, we include a review, written by Xoán Carlos Lagares, of the books *A History of Linguistics: from Antiquity to the Enlightenment (Volume 1)*, and *A History of Linguistics: from the 19th century to the threshold of the 20th Century (Volume 2)*, by Marcos Bagno, both published by Parábola Editorial in 2023.

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