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**Language and the Senses of "Nacionalism"
and "Identity" in Brazil at the end of the
Nineteenth Century**

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Abstract

The late nineteenth century represents the second period of Brazilian Portuguese grammatization (Guimarães, 1996). The term, formulated by Sylvain Auroux (1992), means to describe a language based on two technologies that are still the pillars of our metalinguistic knowledge: the grammar and dictionary. In the end of the century, Brazilian Portuguese grammatization configures a significant production of these tools (grammars and dictionaries) constructing a space of difference to the Portuguese spoken in Brazil, in an attempt to establish a Brazilian identity. We intend in this paper to show the functioning of some textual procedures that constitute the meanings of language in some of these tools, including newspapers, in this specific case, because, some of the authors of grammars were writers of articles in newspapers produced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Therefore our attempt will be to understand how the designation is established: on one hand to verify what kind of metaphors produce meanings on the word language, on the other hand to show that the enunciation about the language, in the relation between the name language and other forms that are used, is a work space in which the construction of identity and the national subject is assured. It can be affirmed that from this confrontation differences and/or regularities emerge that allow the observation of the foundation of a discourse about Brazilian identities, from the comprehension of the way that enunciation positions are sustained when talking about the subject in the time period proposed.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, History of Linguistics Ideas; Grammatization; National language.

Introduction

The objective of this exposition is to understand the designation of the word *language* in newspapers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, observing the way in which it was used through metaphors. What we seek is above all to understand the functioning of some textual procedures that constitute the meanings of *language* in the event.

Therefore our attempt will be to understand how the designation is established: on one hand to verify what kind of metaphors produce meanings on the word *language*, on the other hand to show that the enunciation about the language, in the relation between the name *language* and other forms that are used, is a work space in which the construction of identity and the national subject is assured.

It can be affirmed that from this confrontation differences and/or regularities emerge that allow the observation of the foundation of a discourse about Brazilian identities, from the comprehension of the way that enunciation positions are sustained when talking about the subject in the time period proposed. Concerning this we can anticipate the fact that the meanings about the subject constitute themselves in a movement of double designation, in which the first coincides with what was being named by an approximation (and its various confrontations) between the meanings of "foreigner" and "Brazilian" in national ground.

These two meanings will be worked with the terms "language" and "civilization", in a space of enunciation in which the imaginary (the representation) passes by the relations with the European world and especially with France.

Language, Metaphor and Subjectivity

Every experience in which subjectivity and the production of meanings are concerned involves historical ways of understanding the very experience of itself. And these experiences are not possible except through language.

As an academic in the field of language sciences, I dedicated myself to the task of studying the instantiation of the metaphorical meaning. In this study, as part of my previous journey, I seek to discuss the phenomenon of the metaphorical meaning formation and its relation to memory in a background that involves the concept of the formulation of national language and, consequently, the identity process configuration.

We will see that the metaphor is a memory present in various texts. And as memory, "remembers and forgets and opens the way for change" (Guimarães, 1995, p. 88). Also, we are going to notice, in the case of the texts that I have studied, that meaning is a relationship of the body with the words from language and in language. What enables the shifting of designations between the body and the language is the effect on the enunciations of metaphorical constructions that appear in the text in a constant movement of reconfiguration

and building into the language, a form of particularizing existence, which operates its institutionalization.

Language, Metaphor and Memory

How would be all these reflections on the metaphorical meaning now brought to the production of singularities, when thinking about the discussion of the national language in Brazil of the early twentieth century?

In the theoretical perspective of the Semantics of the Event or historical studies of enunciation, perspective in which I stand to ponder the question of meaning in language, *there is no way to talk of meaning without mentioning memory, or talk about memory without mentioning meaning.*

We propose to approach this issue in its historical dimension, that is, trying to understand what practices have made the subject to mark himself in the enunciation through linguistic innovations, such as the increased use of certain structures, which were accepted by the community. For this, understanding the functioning of the metaphorical meaning is key. It is interesting to notice in the texts how the modulated local metaphor supports the authors' formulations. It builds the meanings of national identity through the use of the referential expression "in Brazil", for example, relativizing the rhetoric effect on memory.

Let me turn to highlight some metaphors that appear in newspaper articles to verify the construction of textuality. In a way, we will see that speaking the same language would be a signal of extension of the same civility for the newspaper articles writers (in the early 20th century). It meant that a single language was shared in two different lands, effects of the identity and representation games in a language policy. So studying the language includes the study of the way we produce knowledge of the language: that is what I sought when I worked with newspaper texts.

Language, Naturalization and Individuation

The newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* (The state of São Paulo in a free translation) was initially a journal produced by the Brazilian literate elite. It was founded in 1875 by a group of Republicans led by Francisco Rangel Pestana and Américo de Campos. At that time, it was named *The Province of São Paulo*, in a free translation from *A Provincia de São Paulo*, and just happened to have another name in 1889, with the proclamation of the Republic.

Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the journal was presented in the form of a six to eight-page book, divided into several sections in which circulated from advertisements on various topics to translations of French novels and scientific papers. Still at that moment, especially in the late nineteenth century, there was a whole positivist order that guided the discussions of writers and less frequent collaborators. The statements that I'll

comment were taken from articles written by Oliveira Lima (one of the founders of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, diplomat and, for several years, a professor in Washington) and Silvio de Almeida (Portuguese language teacher at a teacher's college in São Paulo, and collaborator in the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* for over a decade and a half).

The analysis of the articles enabled us to verify that the discussion of the national language is placed, at first, in the order of naturalization - there is a set of metaphors that predicates the Brazilian Portuguese language as a body that supports the nationality of those who were born there.

Here are, then, the analysis of some sequences extracted from an article written by Oliveira Lima and two articles written by Silvio de Almeida. The text produced by the first author was published in a section of the newspaper entitled "National Issues", in which he wrote regularly; the other, Silvio de Almeida, published his writings in a section named "Digressions" for more than a decade. A study of the designation of the names in the daily newspaper sections would show an interesting understanding of language and meaning, which, as those who work with language discourse know, is neither neutral nor transparent

As I stated earlier, I will first present the statements by Oliveira Lima, translated from his original texts. In this presentation, I will not quote the sequences (I've brought them separated for whom wants to read them later); I will just, for a question of time, comment some expressions.

- 1) "The transition period that the Portuguese transplanted in Brazil runs through is certainly what most influences in general grammatical inadequacy of the present time: for it is curious to note that language issues assume national proportions and a serious character, in a land where not writing well is ordinary. (...) For this reason, for such external imperfections will not convert an essential deformation, it is more than necessary to bear in mind what Gonçalves Dias denominated as respect to the genius of the language (...)"
- 2) "The changes, thus, will operate superficially, even substantially, but without touching the living sources and intimate language structure. The inevitable transformation has indeed to be regulated to not become anarchic, to be gradual so as not to break in precipitation. In the end, it may happen that it affects the bottom, in that genius of the language. Translating this as it translates the character of the people, it is to be changed if the character presents notable differentiation."
- 3) "The relationship between language and national character is an undeniable thing, soon it is recognized the writer who, choosing another language as a means of transmission of his thoughts, leaves aside the proper instrument of intellectual communication with his audience. The languages correspond to certain race or people predicates, and these qualities are reflected in the idiom." (Oliveira Lima, PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE IN BRAZIL – National Issues, *O ESTADO DE SÃO PAULO*, Thursday, 23/05/1907)

Oliveira Lima's consideration about the changes imposed by the Orthographic Agreement (between Portugal and Brazil) brought the issue of the modification of language body, such as the non-acceptance of difference, under penalty of condemning its structure. From the first text passage, we can extract the following expressions, all of them relating to changes in the "body" of the language: "Grammatical inadequacy", "external imperfections will not convert an essential deformation," or, "(...) we will produce an essential deformation if we touch the living sources and intimate language structure." To the author the change should be "regulated to not become anarchic, to be gradual so as not to break in precipitation". He also formulates a prediction of what, for him, seems inevitable, as it appears in the final part of the sequence 2: "In the end, it may happen that it affects the bottom, in that genius of the language. Translating this as it translates the character of the people, it is to be changed if the character presents notable differentiation."

Unlike Oliveira Lima who had a softer tone in his consideration on the national language, Silvio de Almeida was more acid. For him, the simplifications, product of the Orthographic Agreement, were "deformities" (Sequence 5) or "unripe fruit" (Sequence 5); and the Reformation itself was a "cacography" (sequence 4) or a "lost birth" (sequence 6) of the Brazilian Academy of Letters (sequence 6). We then see how Silvio de Almeida, affected by the meanings imposed by the reform, puts himself in a position to look at the language, in its new order, as a "ruined fruit" that did not thrive. For the author, a language is defined by the use, by the "assimilative power of the people who speak it," and not by imposition, "by unexpected movement" made by "immortal".

These issues, although under the heading "Digressions", are used to situate the work of S. de Almeida in his time and present a language problem to which he replies: the formation of a way of thinking about the national language in which the issue of unity remains: for while it sets a way of thinking about language that is constituted by its historicization in another territory, in a new space and a new time, it is strongly signified by the desire for maintaining a unity with Portugal, the desire of belonging to the same language. In a way, belonging to the same language would be, at that time, the signal of extension of the same civility, meaning that a single language would be shared in different lands.

But there is a fundamental contradiction in Silvio de Almeida: while he does not accept the change, including the difference by use, when he incorporates into his text terms of indigenous languages as "shamans" and "loincloth" (Sequence 4):

- 4) "Nobody denies that - with rare exceptions - the Brazilian Academy is the finest of our mentality. There, as in solemn forest, live, far from profane eyes, the distinguished shamans, the brave people that is known by Europe have already considered - men in suits and wearing derbies, no longer wearing loincloth, with archery, and eaters of human flesh ... (...) But, whatever it is - and I recognize it is a lot - the Academy of

Letters' authority, surely it shall not cover up, and could never cover up, its recent orthographic reform, which deserved to be called cacography by the caustic Mr. Carlos de Laet. (...)"

- 5) "The simplifications are confused with deformities which heavily mistreat our visual habits; they not only reform, but also distort the spelling of Portuguese. Unripe fruit of many doctoral digressions, there was a replacing of some incongruities for others. But then it is natural that to these, new and anomalous, we prefer those that use tolerates and even enshrines. The very nature of conservation of certain organs that have lost their original function is an eloquent example: they do not disappear abruptly; and the same may be said with regards to some letters, which are present in a word reminding it of its previous skeleton, more complicated and powerful".
- 6) "To the untimely reform, which received the consecration of academic Brahmins at a bad moment (a slightly less repulsive consecration, but more illogical than that of the positivists and Nunes), could barely serve to increase our graphic disorder, under the specious excuse, only now remembered, to put writing within reach of the ignorant ... Founded so long ago, our Academy, as certain animals, lost its first birth because it happened to teach people how to write wrong..." (Silvio de Almeida, Digressions, THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO, Monday, 07/15/1907)

In an article published on September 23, 1907, Almeida produces a division between political power and philological power/knowledge from elements that make the particularity of their meanings in a movement that brings the inversion of the "deformed body" metaphor: these are metaphors that make a passage from the body to language, from language to body: the designation formulates a more spiritual than organic meaning for the language, as we can see from the findings that the author weaves in the end of his text, transcribed the following sequence:

- 7) "It was largely the conservation of word structure, with its "superfluities", which allowed to find in the treasure of language, as in a tabernacle, the soul of the older generations, that soul that did not die because writing, particularly, has perpetuated it."

This issue of body division, sometimes mutilated, sometimes sacralized, returns to his texts - sometimes in a veiled way, sometimes vehemently - offering us interesting metaphors on the national language, as seen at the end of this article:

- 8) "I hope (rejoice readers!) to have no more need to throw another shovel of land on that philological monster who, dead, emerged from the bowels of Academica. From the scientific morgue, he went, in pieces, to the cemetery of the past, where it will come out perhaps in some

magazine of the year or in the carnival floats..." (Silvio de Almeida, Digressions, *O Estado de São Paulo*, Monday, 07.23.1907)

For its alterations and modification the body becomes a "monster"! This rejection of imposed change and the insistence, on the one hand by the unity and on the other by the natural evolution of language, mark the discussions that took place in the year of 1907. What they show us is that in the movement of the meanings, the local metaphor brings the possibility of understanding the fluctuations between the same and the different in the discussion on meanings of the national language. The school, the soil, the land work in the reference building in the event (Guimarães, 2002) to the meanings of the national language. People, in all their articulations with different names ("souls", "wild", "foreign"), rewrite the national subject. Therefore, it is through a game between local metaphors (*the language is mainstay, it is the body that supports and/or deforms the nationality*), in the metaphorical process that founds its own space for meaning in/of the language. It is through this double game – between the local metaphor and the metaphorical process – that we found a subject who is an effect of language, a subject which means by the division, for the destabilization in the order of the event.

Considerations

In the last decade, several studies on the Brazilian grammatization of the Portuguese showed how the issues surrounding the language strongly raise the question of national unity and regional diversity.

The resumption of metaphors built in the texts of writers in the Republican newspaper produces a memory effect which is to rewrite the discourse of national unity (and transnational) in a historical moment in which identity is placed by the same motion that suspends diversity. And that is the language game operating; a political and not etymological game.

It is about a veiled war between "being in the same" and "make the different have meanings" whose horizon is politics: a language policy that suspends diversity to mean as a unit. It is a crucial cut that launches the nationality, whose meanings do not escape to contemporary, Republican journalists, at a particular time and place: a São Paulo newspaper of the early twentieth century.

Thus, the analysis of texts published in the newspaper highlights the act of writing of these authors that exceeds the reflections of legitimate discourse on the language. Writing in the newspaper marks the way to inaugurate a thought about the language that relates it not only to its internal movements, but with the exterior: the language in the newspaper is "full of externality".

Finally, it is interesting to notice how the formation of the reference metaphors in the texts published in newspapers produce a way of understanding the Brazilian grammatization of Portuguese, since it points out to a foundation of a writing gesture that goes beyond the evidences of the

reflections engendered in the stabilized speech about the language: it is a gesture that marks the everyday history of these ordinary authors and their relationship with the language in a text logic that produces a thought about this concept at a time and in a space where the idea of nation is established. In this sense, the Orthographic Agreement from 1907 presented a number of significant points regarding the language in its unity: it shows how the development of a reform movement coincides with a moment of theoretical engagement and crisis of legitimacy, because it underlines how fundamental theoretical decisions on language taken by a commission mark the development of a meta-language conceived as a decisive instrument in the history of the constitution of the national subject.

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