

IS IT NEEDED TO REINTERPRET THE SOCIAL FACT CONCEPT IN SAUSSURE?

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- **ABSTRACT:** Saussure's ideas published in the *Course in General Linguistics* (CGL) produced a discursive event and circulated the discourse which defends that, by excluding speaking from the object of study of linguistics, Saussure excluded the social fact from the sciences of speech (Meillet, Voloshinov). After 100 years of this publication, we wonder if it is necessary to reinterpret the concept of social fact in Saussure. Our question is based mainly on passages from the CGL that prove how much Saussure was concerned with this issue, when he presented the concepts of community of speakers, the collective character of the linguistic sign, language as a social institution and also because of the influences of authors who dealt with such a subject as Durkheim and Whitney. The purpose of this article is to problematize this discourse, which is made evident by reflecting on the question of social fact in the Swiss linguist. To carry out this research, we collected statements from the CGL and opposed it with criticisms from language scholars, who argue that Saussure made the exclusion of the social fact in the constitution of linguistic science. From this research, we were able to understand that he did not neglect the social fact, on the contrary, when discussing the dependence on the collective contract, Saussure realized that, for systematic relations to work, social ratification was necessary.
- **KEYWORDS:** social fact; Saussure; course in general linguistics; discourse analysis.

Introduction

It is not difficult, when we read books about Ferdinand de Saussure or about linguistic science, to find the assertion that, Saussure excluded the social from studies of speech, when he chose the language as the object of study of that science. It is also not difficult to find in the book *Course in General Linguistics*, now CGL, several passages that relate terms such as community of speakers, language as a social institution/collective contract, among others, to the study of linguistics. From this, we doubt if there was not a gesture of reading of the CGL that overestimated the systematic view

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and erased the social view of the language that Saussure also presented in his courses taught in Geneva at the beginning of the 20th century. 100 years after the publication of the CGL, with a more mature look, would not it be necessary to reinterpret the concept of social fact in Saussure?

From the Discourse Analysis (French orientation) point of view, we propose to understand the discourses that circulate about Saussure which build the image that he has abandoned the social, the speaker, the speaking by giving more emphasis to the system as an object of science to study linguistics. When we read the CGL carefully, we saw that this is not confirmed, because, although there is no elaborated concept, there are several passages in it that shows that the language is linked to history, to the subject and to society. Guided by the discursive eye, we ask ourselves why there are statements that affirm that Saussure did not pay attention to the social in language studies. Without this social feature of language, without the community of speakers that Saussure deals with, how could a system work? What conditions of production allowed these discourses about Saussure to emerge and not others in their place? Why was this the image of Saussure that circulated? Amid so many statements, why did only those who referred to the systemic feature of the language highlighted? Why did language as a social fact in Saussure not have the same prestige as systemic Saussure? Which subject positions defended the image of a systemic Saussure? These were some doubts that appeared in our study.

In order to answer such questions, we went on to investigate if not the genesis of this vision, at least a path that would show us where and when these statements started and who made them. We met several foreign authors, such as Voloshinov, Meillet, Pêcheux, and Brazilians as well, like Lopes and Marcuschi. This does not mean that they were the only ones to make statements like the ones described, but that they serve as an example to verify the positions of subjects who constructed the image of a systemic Saussure.

On this subject, Christian Puech and Jean-Louis Chiss have already dedicated several studies which demonstrated that the idea of exclusion from the social in Saussure was produced by the reception given to the CGL. This article aims to offer contributions to what has already been presented on the topic. It is imperative to understand the circulation of this discourse and its contradictions over time. It is noted that, many times, such circulation is resumed and repeated as if it were in the order of evidence: the way Saussure was read and interpreted over the years shows us how important it is for scholars in our area to update themselves as a researcher and as a teacher. The Saussurean studies that were formed in the last decades lead us to review the circulation of meanings about the one who was considered the founder of linguistics.

When it comes to studying the CGL, we must take into account that it is a posthumous work, which Saussure did not write himself. In this sense, the ideas of the professor of Geneva were presented from the perceptions of his students in an attempt to faithfully reproduce his thoughts. However, we run into the question of the reading gesture that the editors made: it is a view crossed by the interpretation of the *other*. Because of this, the credibility of the ideas put on the CGL is a topic that generates discussions. This, as

is known, became stronger when Saussure's handwritten sources were found. From the analysis of these documents, critics such as De Mauro, S. Bouquet, R. Engler made us see that many interpretations generated misunderstandings about the true ideas of the Genevan professor. As everything that has been written about Saussure until today is interpretation, ours is one more. Perhaps still in a hurry, needing to mature. However, we rely on Normand's words (2012, p.12 *apud* BRAIT, 2016, p.94, our translation):

Each generation of readers produced and continues to produce their preferred way of reading, marked by the intellectual context of the moment, so that the history of Saussurian thought could be made as [being] that of its interpretations for a century or so.¹

The construction of discourses for linguistic science: Saussure excluded the social fact

The purpose of this item is to present how some intellectuals, over the years, disseminated the discourse that Saussure excluded the social fact when he chose the language as the object of study of linguistics. In this sense, the statements made on the subject built the discourse that the Swiss professor concentrated only on the systemic view in his studies.

Let us begin with what Antoine Meillet said in 1916. Saussure's disciple wrote a review of the book when he heard about the publication of the *Course in General Linguistics*: "By separating linguistic change from the external conditions on which it depends, F. de Saussure deprives it of reality; it reduces it to a necessarily inexplicable abstraction" (*in* NORMAND *et al.*, 1978, p.166 *apud* CRUZ, 2016, p.38, our translation)². In the passage selected, Meillet argues that Saussure separates linguistic change from external conditions, highlighting the idea that in the CGL there is a separation between the systematic and the social.

Voloshinov, in the book *Marxism and Philosophy of Language*, stated that Saussure and his heirs made of the language an ideal abstract object, a homogeneous synchronic system, rejecting the manifestations of speaking, as can be seen in the excerpts below:

If we advance this abstract segregation to the status of a principle, if we reify linguistic form divorced from ideological impletion, as do certain representatives of the second trend, then we end up dealing with a signal and not with a sign of language-speech.

¹ Original: "Cada geração de leitores produziu e continua produzindo seu modo preferencial de leitura, marcada pelo contexto intelectual do momento, de modo que se poderia fazer a história do pensamento saussuriano como [sendo] a de suas interpretações há mais ou menos um século." (NORMAND, 2012, p.12 *apud* BRAIT, 2016, p.94).

² Original: "Ao separar a mudança linguística das condições exteriores das quais ela depende, F. de Saussure a priva de realidade; ele a reduz a uma abstração necessariamente inexplicável." (NORMAND *et al.*, 1978, p.166 *apud* CRUZ, 2016, p.38).

The divorce of language from its ideological impletion is one of abstract objectivism's most serious errors. (VOLOSHINOV, 1973, p.71).

The individual utterance (*parole*), despite the contentions of abstract objectivism, is by no means an individual fact not susceptible to sociological analysis by virtue of its individuality. Indeed, if this were so, neither the sum total of these individual acts nor any abstract features common to all such individual acts ("the normatively identical forms") could possibly engender a social product. (VOLOSHINOV, 1973, p.93).

Let us look at another excerpt in which Voloshinov reflects on the notion of homogeneity of the language and the notion of synchrony of the CGL. He also discusses the sign's monovalence, stating that the sign, because it depends on the enunciation, is changeable:

Thus, Saussure's contention is that language as a system of normatively identical forms must be taken as the point of departure and that all manifestations of speech must be illuminated from the angle of these stable and autonomous forms.

After having distinguished language from speech (speech meaning the sum total of all manifestations of the verbal faculty, i.e., *language*), Saussure proceeds to distinguish language from acts of individual speaking, i.e., from utterance (*parole*) (VOLOSHINOV, 1973, p.60).

What was the weight of Voloshinov and Meillet's words for the time? Under what conditions of production were they written? Thinking specifically about Voloshinov, we find information that helps us to understand the production conditions in which his criticisms were made:

According to Slavist Inna Ageeva (2009), in the 1920s-1930s, in Russia, a movement in the field of language sciences was taking shape that aimed precisely to redefine the object of study of Linguistics, rethink its theory and propose new methodologies. This movement was due to a crisis of historical-comparative and neogrammatic approaches. [...] According to the mentioned author, these new theoretical questions are related to the existence of a sociological orientation of Linguistics in Russia linked to the Marxist methodology, which was configured as a new scientific paradigm since the Revolution of 1917. Linguistics started to think more deeply about the problems related to the relations between language and society. (NARZETTI, 2011, p.1257-1258, our translation)³

³ Original: "Segundo a eslavista Inna Ageeva (2009), nas décadas de 1920-1930, na Rússia, tomava corpo no campo das ciências da linguagem um movimento que visava justamente a redefinir o objeto de estudo da Linguística, repensar

It is possible to note with the quote above that in the 1920s/30s there was a desire in Russia to redefine the object of study of linguistics influenced by a sociological and Marxist orientation. These facts make us glimpse the conditions of production that were behind Voloshinov's criticisms. He aimed, together with his group, to build a new object of study for linguistics, a new methodology. In order to build the foundation for a Marxist linguistic theory, Bakhtin's circle would have to overthrow Saussure and overcome his spreading discourses. About this, Narzetti (2011, p.1258, our translation) mentions that,

[...] according to Ageeva (2009), there were two attitudes towards the ideas of the *Course in General Linguistics*: one that received them favorably (the linguists in Moscow) and one that emphatically rejected them (the linguists from Leningrad). Voloshinov's attitude is in line with the latter.⁴

Narzetti (2011) reveals that Voloshinov came into contact with the CGL in the 1920s and it was in *Marxism and Philosophy of Language* that he dealt directly with Saussure's ideas. In this book published in 1979, Voloshinov spoke about the emergence of the two currents and what constituted the concepts of each. For the referred author, Saussure did nothing new, he chose as object of study what the tradition had already found: the language understood as a system of stable and standardized linguistic forms. "According to the Russian thinker, the problem is that this object was, from its bases, poorly formulated." (NARZETTI, 2011, p.1260, our translation).⁵ Voloshinov argues that the practical use of linguistic forms by the speakers is determined by ideological content and not by its normative aspect, not by being in conformity with the rules. The Russian scholar still considers that the language to be defined as a system of stable and immutable forms is something that cannot be proven:

Indeed, if we were to disregard the subjective, individual consciousness vis-à-vis the language system, the system of norms incontestable for that consciousness, if we were to look at language in a truly objective way - from the side, so to speak or more accurately, from above it, we would discover no inert system of self norms. Instead, we would find ourselves

sua teoria e propor novas metodologias. Esse movimento se devia a uma crise das abordagens histórico-comparativas e neogramáticas. [...] Conforme a referida autora, essas novas questões teóricas são relacionadas à existência de uma orientação sociológica da Linguística na Rússia ligada à metodologia marxista, que se configurava como novo paradigma científico desde a Revolução de 1917. A Linguística passava a pensar mais profundamente os problemas ligados às relações entre linguagem e sociedade." (NARZETTI, 2011, p.1257-1258)

⁴ Original: [...] segundo Ageeva (2009), havia duas atitudes frente às ideias do Curso de Linguística Geral: uma que as recebia favoravelmente (os linguistas de Moscou) e uma que as rejeitava peremptoriamente (os linguistas de Leningrado). A atitude de Voloshinov é conforme a esta última. (NARZETTI, 2011, p.1258)

⁵ Original: "Segundo o pensador russo, o problema é que esse objeto estaria, desde as suas bases, mal formulado." (NARZETTI, 2011, p.1260).

witnessing the ceaseless generation of language norms. (VOLOSHINOV, 1973, p.65-66)

About it, Narzetti (2011, p.1260, our translation) states that:

In short, for the Russian thinker, the Saussurian concept of language is the result of an illegitimate abstraction, which has no equivalent in the real world, in the world of life, and it can therefore only be false. The language, as defined by Saussure, does not represent the “essence of language”, which is in constant motion. The Saussurean definition of language, as a system of stable forms, according to Voloshinov, would not be a rigorous definition consistent with reality, but a definition that only reproduces the conception that the common speaker has of the language - the latter, for not knowing history of her language and not being aware of the changes she has undergone over time, really conceives of her as a system of stable or even immutable forms.⁶

It is possible to note that Voloshinov defends language as an ever-changing phenomenon and considers that Saussure did not adequately address this issue when stating that the cause of the historical change in linguistic forms would be the process of analogy. Following this idea, the history of the language would be governed by chance, since it would be the result of chance errors, errors governed by the speaker’s analogy. Voloshinov does not accept this explanation for the change, because he believes that “language, after all, is a purely historical phenomenon.” (VOLOSHINOV, 1973, p.82). For Voloshinov and his group, the problem with abstract objectivism is not understanding language as a historical phenomenon; they understand it, on the contrary, as a stable and immutable phenomenon. Such a view treats the living language as ready and finished, Voloshinov advocates. In this sense, Saussure would be influenced by a conservative view of philology which denied the influence of history.

As we have seen, Voloshinov presents many arguments to argue that Saussure excluded the historical approach of the language. Voloshinov (1973, p.61) said that Saussure conceived “history as an irrational force distorting the logical purity of the language system.” That is, history and its changes corrupt the logic of the system that language has. In this sense, the referred scholar discards the structuralist conceptions in the construction of a theory of speech that works with the concrete use of language, in the form of enunciation. Another point that the author dislikes is the question of Saussure dealing with the univocal aspect of meaning:

⁶ Original: “Resumindo, para o pensador russo, o conceito saussuriano de língua é o resultado de uma abstração ilegítima, que não encontra equivalente no mundo real, no mundo da vida, só podendo, em consequência, ser falso. A língua, como definida por Saussure, não representa a “essência da linguagem”, que está em constante movimento. A definição saussuriana de língua, enquanto sistema de formas estáveis, segundo Voloshinov, não seria uma definição rigorosa e condizente com a realidade, mas uma definição que apenas reproduz a concepção que o falante comum tem da língua – este último, por não conhecer a história de sua língua e não ter consciência das mudanças que ela sofreu ao longo do tempo, realmente a concebe como um sistema de formas estáveis ou mesmo imutáveis. (NARZETTI, 2011, p.1260).

These endeavors on the linguist's part are further complicated by the fact that he creates the fiction of a single and actual object corresponding to the given word. This object, being single and self-identical, is just what ensures the unity of meaning. The fiction of a word's literal realia promotes to an even greater degree the reification of its meaning. (VOLOSHINOV, 1973, p.80).

Voloshinov defends the polysemic aspect and declares that Saussure privileged the normative aspect by removing from the language its ideological content and the possibility of perceiving the linguistic forms being determined by the ideology in the interaction. In other words, it is in the use that words acquire meanings, varied meanings, including. Saussure, defending the notion of the value of the linguistic sign, conceives that meaning is in the system. Voloshinov, on the contrary, detaches the sense of the forms from the system and throws it to use, as dependent on speaking, denying the univocity of the meaning: “[...] Abstract objectivism, by taking the system of language and regarding it as the entire crux of linguistic phenomena, rejected the speech act - the utterance - as something individual.” (VOLOSHINOV, 1973, p.82).

The discussion presented demonstrates that the conditions for productions at the time directed the reflections of the first readers of the CGL to a systemic look. In this sense, although there was space for the social in the *Course*, it did not appear immediately, since that book gave great attention to the issue of language immanence, directing the scholars' view towards a systematic approach. The way Saussure dealt with the subject, it is difficult to specify what the concept of history, subject and society is for the Genevan. In fact, as Voloshinov points out, the elaboration of a concept of ideology does not appear in the book in question, neither its modes of operation. The attention to the social issue only emerged later, after the discovery of Saussure's handwritten sources and the maturity acquired from the study of these documents, material that the mentioned scholars did not have access to.

About this, Flores (2002) argues that history and linguistic structure are linked to Saussure; he does not reject it, he recognizes, including that history is in the language, but he ends up choosing synchrony because of the need for a theoretical method, since diachronic facts do not allow generalization. The CGL presents categories defined to account for the abstract system of signs, such as value, acoustic image, concept, associative relations, paradigmatic relations, etc. It is not the same on the social plane. Regarding this discussion, Porsche (2008, p.10, our translation) points out that:

Synchrony and language structure are not confused in Saussure. Adopting a synchronous point of view for the study of the language is not equivalent to affirming that the language presents itself to the individual as a rigid system of norms, but refers to the set of regularities that the linguist observes when proceeding with the study of the language. Not using the diachronic point of view for examining the language also does not mean

excluding history as a component of the language, since it is internal to the system, but it is cutting out the object and analyzing it from the perspective appropriate to the proposed theoretical plan.⁷

The referred author helps us to understand the production conditions in which the criticisms directed at Saussure were written:

MFL was written in the 1920s, while the CGL was published in 1916, that is, a few years before, without a translation into Russian until 1933, Saussure's ideas being very recent at the time of MFL production, and apparently, not yet properly understood in its global theoretical plan. Furthermore, Saussure was attributed an influence on Russian formalism that certainly does not correspond to the facts.

The hypothesis that we raise here is Volochínov's ignorance of the Saussurean theoretical complex, in view of the late reception of Saussure's thoughts in Russia and Volochínov's own indications, which makes it clear, in a footnote, that there is little material about the history of philosophy of language, claiming that there are only major researches on ancient linguistics and philosophy of language and few studies consistent in their time, citing a representative of the history of European linguistic ideas, Cassirer, and two Russian authors as texts: Schor, on contemporary linguistic crisis, and Peterson, on linguistics with some consecrated sociological component. In other words, the author, in the desire to search for works that deal with the philosophy of language, does not find the linguistic currents completely systematized, and, when looking for foundations for his thesis, he finds himself without texts that can help him to situate speech as a historical-ideological object, using this scarce material and the linguistic tendencies of its time to build its critical postulates. It is also indicative to remember that the author is immersed in the context of Russian formalist linguistics, which is not limited to Saussure's theory, although it was the current whose conceptions Bakhtin's circle was diametrically opposed to. (PORSCHÉ, 2008, p.14-15, our translation)⁸

⁷ Original: "*Sincronia e estrutura da língua não se confundem em Saussure. Adotar um ponto de vista sincrônico para o estudo da língua não se equipara a afirmar que a língua se apresenta ao indivíduo como um sistema rígido de normas, mas refere-se ao conjunto de regularidades que o lingüista observa ao proceder o estudo da língua. Não utilizar o ponto de vista diacrônico para o exame da língua também não significa excluir a história como componente da língua, uma vez que ela é interna ao sistema, mas é recortar o objeto e analisá-lo pela perspectiva adequada ao plano teórico proposto.*" (PORSCHÉ, 2008, p.10).

⁸ Original: "*MFL foi escrito nos anos 20, ao passo que o CLG foi publicado em 1916, ou seja, poucos anos antes, sem haver tradução para o russo até 1933, sendo as idéias de Saussure muito recentes no momento da produção de MFL e, aparentemente, ainda não devidamente compreendidas em seu plano teórico global. Além disso, atribuiu-se a Saussure uma influência sobre o formalismo russo que certamente não corresponde aos fatos. A hipótese que levantamos aqui é o*

Voloshinov, when he made his analysis in 1920, did not have access to what today's scholars say is true Saussurian thought. As a result, it was only possible to revise what was said about Saussure years later, with the discovery of the *Manuscript Sources* and other documents, since the CGL did not provide the necessary subsidy for scholars at the beginning of the century to understand the social fact as it appeared in the 1916 publication. It is not, therefore, to say that the criticisms made in MFL are inconsistent when compared to the CGL. It is about understanding that, only today we have the maturity to understand the weight of these statements for the time.

The question to be considered is that the first evaluations carried out by the CGL constituted the discourses that Saussure excluded the social fact from linguistic studies. On this, Calvet (1975, p.55, our translation) reveals that Voloshinov, with his criticisms, helps to hide this social aspect of speech in Saussure: "This concealment of the social aspect of speech involves the concealment of Marr and Voloshinov"⁹. For Calvet (1975), the fact that structuralism develops by denying history and the social is largely due to Voloshinov:

What is most astonishing here is that Volochínov, in addition to his desire to anchor the linguistic fact in social practice, formulates at the same time a critique of structural linguistics that does not yet exist (this is 1929, the year in which the linguistic circle of Prague will be released) [...] (CALVET, 1975, p.76, our translation)¹⁰

About the criticisms described, Brait (2016) defends Voloshinov and quotes important passages in which he mentions Saussure to advance his dialogical theory of speech. Saussure in Voloshinov, analyzes Brait (2016), is not merely an object of rejection: he is an epistemological counterpoint essential to the constitution of his ideas. Brait (2016) accuses some readers of having frivolously said that Voloshinov "destroys

desconhecimento do complexo teórico saussuriano por Volochínov, tendo em vista a recepção tardia dos pensamentos de Saussure na Rússia e indicações do próprio Volochínov, que deixa claro, em nota de rodapé, haver pouco material sobre a história da filosofia da linguagem, alegando existirem apenas pesquisas de grande importância sobre a lingüística e a filosofia da linguagem antigas e poucos estudos consistentes em seu tempo, citando um representante da história das idéias lingüísticas europeia, Cassirer, e dois autores russos como textos: Schor, a respeito da crise contemporânea da lingüística, e Peterson, sobre lingüística com algum componente sociológico consagrado. Ou seja, o autor, no desejo de buscar obras que tratem da filosofia da linguagem, não encontra sistematizadas as correntes lingüísticas de forma completa, e, ao procurar por fundamentos para a sua tese, vê-se desprovido de textos que lhe possam auxiliar no intento de situar a linguagem como objeto histórico-ideológico, recorrendo a esse escasso material e às tendências lingüísticas de sua época para construir seus postulados críticos. Também é indicativo lembrar que o autor está mergulhado no contexto da lingüística formalista russa, que não se resume à teoria de Saussure, embora fosse a corrente a cujas concepções o círculo de Bakhtin se opunha diametralmente." (PORSCHÉ, 2008, p.14-15)

⁹ Original: "Esse ocultamento do aspecto social da linguagem passa pelo ocultamento de Marr e Volochinov." (CALVET, 1975, p.55).

¹⁰ Original: "O que mais espanta aqui é que Voloshinov, além da sua vontade de ancorar o fato lingüístico na prática social, formula ao mesmo tempo uma crítica da lingüística estrutural que ainda não existe (estamos em 1929, o ano em que as teses do Círculo Lingüístico de Praga vão ser divulgadas) [...]" (CALVET, 1975, p.76)

Saussurean linguistics” (BRAIT, 2016, p.103, our translation).¹¹ The referred author argues that Saussure’s linguistics of speaking is “[...] absolutely necessary for Bakhtin to be able to present a stylistics of *discourse, sociological, of the genre*, which has as its object the novel, literary prose as a genre.” (BRAIT, 2016, p.100, our translation).¹² In this sense, the scholar insists on the fact that Voloshinov does not return to Saussure to be disqualified:

On the contrary, these approaches put linguistics in a place of scientific importance, in a way, for example, to oppose the concept of *parole* coming from Saussure, a product of the coherence of Saussurian thought, the concept of *discourse*, forged in the collective conception of speech, me/other relationship. [...] as Bakhtin develops the concept of discourse genre, which he confirms the type of productive relationship [...] around the *abstract-concrete* binomial he establishes with Saussurean linguistics (abstract perspective of language), to put himself, naturally, in a different epistemological place, in the sense that the work with the concrete, with the use of language, for the construction of a theory whose object of study is *discourse*, does not exclude reflection around the language system. (BRAIT, 2016, p.105-106, our translation)¹³

As Brait (2016) proves, Voloshinov did not read Saussure as we think he did. As a consequence, linguistics is developed based on these criticisms of Voloshinov, taking them as law. Let us see, for example, Weedwood (2002, p.152, our translation), when narrating about what the Russian philosopher defends, disseminates the discourse that he denied Saussure’s ideals:

Bakhtin emphasizes precisely speaking, *parole*, enunciation and affirms its social nature, not individual: *parole* is inextricably linked to the conditions of communication, which are always linked to social structures. Therefore, any change in ideology causes a change in the language. The evolution of language reflects social variations (and in these statements Bakhtin anticipated sociolinguistics by half a century). If it is true that the change obeys, in part, the internal laws of the

¹¹ Original: “*acaba com a linguística saussuriana.*” (BRAIT, 2016, p.103).

¹² Original: “[...] *absolutamente necessária para que Bakhtin possa apresentar uma estilística do discurso, sociológica, do gênero, que tem como objeto o romance, a prosa literária como gênero.*” (BRAIT, 2016, p.100).

¹³ Original: “*Ao contrário, esses encaminhamentos vão colocando a linguística num lugar de importância científica, de maneira, por exemplo, a contrapor ao conceito de parole vindo de Saussure, produto da coerência do pensamento saussuriano, o conceito de discurso, forjado na concepção coletiva de linguagem, de relação eu/outro. [...] na medida em que Bakhtin vai desenvolvendo o conceito de gênero do discurso, que ele confirma o tipo de relação produtiva [...] em torno do binômio abstrato-concreto, que estabelece com a linguística saussuriana (perspectiva abstrata da língua), para colocar-se, naturalmente, num lugar epistemológico diferente, no sentido de que o trabalho com o concreto, com o uso da língua, para a construção de uma teoria que tem como objeto de estudo o discurso, não exclui a reflexão em torno do sistema da língua.*” (BRAIT, 2016, p.105-106).

language, the fact is that this change is mainly governed by external laws, of a social nature. The dialectic, moving, living sign is opposed to the inert “sign” that comes off the analysis of language as an abstract synchronic system.¹⁴

Let us see in the last lines of the quote above, when it is said that the sign of Voloshinov (dialectic, in motion) is opposed to the sign (called “signal”) inert, belonging to an abstract synchronous system (directly linked to Saussure).

Another fact that also cooperates to create this view that Saussure excludes the social from language studies is that, in 1926, when the Prague Linguistic Circle was created, the group read Saussure basically for its systemic view that the CGL contained. This put language in the foreground as a pure value system. Thus, we must not forget that the first theories arising from Saussurean linguistics came from Prague and from this systemic view. The world will know Saussure from the studies in Prague that has, as one of its founders, Jakobson. As a consequence, the history and the way the CGL was interpreted in the first years of its publication acted so that Saussure was seen as systemic.

And these discourses continued to proliferate: just remember that in 1931, Hjelmslev created the Copenhagen Language Circle, which held one of CGL’s most systemic readings, exploring the concept of language as a form and not a substance. We also have Martinet, in the book *Économie des changements phonétiques*, published in 1955, which defended a systemic vision for linguistic change.

This “exclusion from the social fact” reverberated among many scholars of the language:

Thus, the language is thought by Saussure as a homogeneous scientific object (belonging to the “semiological” region) whose specificity is established on two theoretical exclusions:

- the exclusion of speaking in the inaccessible of linguistic science;
- the exclusion of “non-semiological” institutions outside the area of relevance of linguistic science. (PÊCHEUX, 1990 p.71).¹⁵

¹⁴ Original: “Bakhtin enfatiza precisamente a fala, a parole, a enunciação e afirma sua natureza social, não individual: a parole está indissoluvelmente ligada às condições de comunicação, que estão sempre ligadas às estruturas sociais. Portanto, toda modificação da ideologia acarreta uma modificação na língua. A evolução da língua reflete as variações sociais (e nessas afirmações Bakhtin se antecipou em meio século à sociolinguística). Se é verdade que a mudança obedece, em parte, às leis internas da língua, o fato é que essa mudança é regida sobretudo a leis externas, de natureza social. O signo dialético, movente, vivo se opõe ao “sinal” inerte que se desprende da análise da língua como sistema sincrônico abstrato.” (WEEWOOD, 2002, p.152).

¹⁵ Original: “Assim, a língua é pensada por Saussure como um objeto científico homogêneo (pertencente à região do “semiológico”) cuja especificidade se estabelece sobre duas exclusões teóricas:
- a exclusão da fala no inacessível da ciência linguística:
- a exclusão das instituições “não semiológicas” para fora da zona de pertinência da ciência linguística.” (PÊCHEUX, 1990 p.71).

The founder of Discourse Analysis understands that Saussure thinks language as a scientific object that is formed from the exclusion of speaking from the field of study of linguistics. Along the same lines of thought, we have the words of the Paveau and Sarfati (2006, p.62, our translation):

Saussure's work establishes, in effect, a break with the comparative linguistics of his time, proposing a non-historical, descriptive and systematic approach (later to be said, 'structural').¹⁶

In Brazil, these discourses about the exclusion of social fact by Saussure continued to produce representatives:

[...] Saussure left a persistent image of championing the separation between internal linguistics (outside the socio-historical context) and external linguistics (the one that considers the external factors that condition linguistic phenomena). (LOPES, 1980, p.72, our translation).¹⁷

Faraco, commenting on the generative ideas, reveals that they emerge on the way of structural linguistics of the Saussurean inspiration "that cut out a systemic, synchronic and separate object from speaking." (FARACO, 2016, p.17, our translation)¹⁸. In another excerpt from this book, Faraco argues that Saussure's reception as a structuralist is due to a misreading of Voloshinov's readers who were led by his rhetoric:

One of the most interesting aspects of receiving Bakhtin's ideas in Brazil is certainly the fact that readers have been seduced by Volochinov's rhetoric in Marxism and Philosophy of Language. The criticism he developed, in the second part of the book, of the two main trends in linguistic thought of his time - which he called "abstract objectivism" and "idealistic subjectivism" - was taken, among us, as a definitive condemnatory judgment of those trends. And, as such, it was, in almost-perfect paraphrases, repeated "ad nauseam", in theses, dissertations, articles, communications and conferences (FARACO, 2006, p.125, our translation).¹⁹

¹⁶ Original: "O trabalho de Saussure instaura, com efeito, uma ruptura com a lingüística comparatista de sua época, propondo uma abordagem não histórica, descritiva e sistemática (dir-se-à, mais tarde, 'estrutural')." (PAVEAU; SARFATI, 2006, p.62).

¹⁷ Original: "[...] Saussure deixou uma persistente imagem de campeão da separação entre a lingüística interna (fora do contexto sócio-histórico) e a lingüística externa (a que considera os fatores exteriores que condicionam os fenômenos lingüísticos)." (LOPES, 1980, p.72).

¹⁸ Original: "que recortam um objeto sistêmico, sincrônico e separado da fala." (FARACO, 2016, p.17).

¹⁹ Original: "Um dos aspectos mais interessantes da recepção das idéias do Círculo de Bakhtin no Brasil é, certamente, o fato de os leitores terem se deixado seduzir pela retórica de Voloshinov em *Marxismo e Filosofia da Linguagem*. A crítica que ele desenvolveu, na segunda parte do livro, às duas principais tendências do pensamento lingüístico de

The first readings made on the CGL really guided the circulation of the senses about Saussure, however it is not possible to demand from the authors of the 1920s, a point of view on a material that the scholars of the time did not have access to. It is necessary to make it clear, first of all, that the considerations made by scholars are the result of the historicity of the time in which they lived.

Another author we are going to name is Marcuschi. The Brazilian linguist criticizes the Genevan professor when he says that:

Surely Saussure proceeded by some very serious reductions in his synchronic cut and his systematic vision, following paths that prevented a treatment in the language in the primordial observation of its discursive and social characteristic.

Consequently, in the linguistic studies of Saussurean brand, the project that predominated in the *Course's* tradition substantially suffocated the subject, society, history, cognition and the discursive functioning of the language, in order to obtain a controlled aseptic object created by the formal synchronic view. (MARCUSCHI. 2008, p.30).²⁰

In this exhibition of ideas and authors in which we seek the conditions of production for the discourses that circulated about Saussure, it is worth mentioning what William Labov says in *Sociolinguistic Patterns*, a book published in 1972. In an item called "The Saussurean approach to 'langue'", Labov (1972) reveals that there is a paradox in this Saussurean approach: Saussure teaches that language is a social part of speech and that there is no language outside the social contract established between members of a community. In this sense, explains Labov (1972), Saussure's Geneva school is conceived as the "'social' school of linguistics" (LABOV, 1972, p.185). The paradox occurs, explains the author, due to the fact that the Saussurian heirs, who work within this tradition,

[...] not deal with social life at all: they work with one or two informants in their offices, or examine their own knowledge of langue. Furthermore, they insist that explanations of linguistic facts be drawn from other linguistic facts, not from any 'external' data on social behavior. (LABOV, 1972, p.185).

seu tempo – que ele denominou de "objetivismo abstrato" e "subjetivismo idealista" – foi tomada, entre nós, como juízo condenatório definitivo daquelas tendências. E, como tal, foi sendo, em paráfrases quase-perfeitas, repetida "ad nauseam", em teses, dissertações, artigos, comunicações e conferências." (FARACO, 2006, p.125).

²⁰ Original: "Seguramente Saussure procedeu por algumas reduções muito sérias em seu recorte sincrônico e sua visão sistemática, seguindo caminhos que impediram um trato na língua na observação primordial de sua característica discursiva e social. Em consequência, nos estudos linguísticos de marca saussuriana, o projeto que predominou na tradição do Curso sufocou sensivelmente o sujeito, a sociedade, a história, a cognição e o funcionamento discursivo da língua, a fim de obter um objeto asséptico controlado criado pelo ponto de vista sincrônico formal." (MARCUSCHI. 2008, p.30).

After this statement, Labov (1972, p.185), in note number 2 in the book, reveals that:

Saussure's contemporary Meillet thought that the twentieth century would see the development of historical explanation based on the examination of language change embedded in social change (1905). But students of Saussure such as Martinet (1964) actively repudiated this notion, and urged that linguistic explanation be confined to the interrelations of internal, structural factors.

Labov sees a paradox: if language is part of the social discourse and does not exist outside the social contract, how do Saussure's heirs work with a systematic view and outside of social contexts? Labov himself, following these ideas, reveals that if language is a grammatical system that exists virtually in each brain, as Saussure argues in the CGL, the data to make a linguistic analysis could be obtained from the testimony of a single person, a single speaker. On the other hand, "explanations of linguistic facts can be drawn from other linguistic facts, not from any 'external' data on social behavior." (LABOV, 1972, p.185). And this for the author is a paradox "[...] the social aspect of language is studied by observing any one individual, but the individual aspect only by observing language in its social context." (LABOV, 1972, p.185).

Labov (1972, p.187) does not agree with the fact that Saussure's heirs insist on the homogeneity of the language and the heterogeneity of speaking:

Linguistics has thus been defined in such a way as to exclude the study of social behavior or the study of speech. The definition has been convenient for the formulators, who by disposition preferred to work from their own knowledge, with the individual informants, or with secondary materials.

The referred author reveals that it is much more convenient for linguists to work with abstract data than to enter in communities of speakers to obtain concrete analysis data.

In order to understand the interpretive gesture that they made of Saussure's ideas in the last century, we still find it pertinent to bring some passages from the CGL which point to a systematic study of the language. This is because, according to Calvet (1975), many of these passages were added by the CGL Editors. There is a directing of the look to read Saussure from a systemic view:

“Whereas speech is heterogeneous, language, as defined, is homogeneous. It is a system of signs in which the only essential thing is the union of meanings and sound-images, and in which both parts of the sign are psychological.” (p. 15)

“[...] to consider language and speaking from the same viewpoint would be fanciful [...]. Such is the first bifurcation that we find in trying to formulate the theory of speech. We must choose between two routes that cannot be followed simultaneously; they must be followed separately.

One might if really necessary apply the term linguistics to each of the two disciplines and speak of a linguistics of speaking. But that science must not be confused with linguistics proper, whose sole object is language.

I shall deal only with linguistics of language, and if I subsequently use material belonging to speaking to illustrate a point, I shall try never to erase the boundaries that separate the two domains.” (p. 19-20)

“My definition of language presupposes the exclusion of everything that is outside its organism or system—in a word, of everything known as ‘external linguistics.’” (p. 20)

“Language is a system that has its own arrangement.” (p. 22)

“A language constitutes a system. [...] The system is a complex mechanism that can be grasped only through reflection; (p. 73)

“Very few linguists suspect that the intervention of the factor of time creates difficulties peculiar to linguistics and open to their science two completely divergent paths.” (p. 79)

“The opposition between the two viewpoints, the synchronic and the diachronic, is absolute and allows no compromise.” (p.83)

“[...] *the true and unique object of linguistics is language studied in and for itself.*” (p. 232)

These CGL phrases have a systematic view of speech and do not open space for the social in linguistic studies. This guides the way language has been analyzed over the years, as we saw in the discussion presented in that item.

The deconstruction of discourses: Saussure does not exclude the social from language studies

The deconstruction of the discourses about Saussure is marked by the encounter of his handwritten sources. From these, the criticisms of the CGL and how it distorts Saussure’s thoughts appear. Engler, De Mauro, Bouquet are in search of true Saussurian

thoughts and they made every effort to deconstruct the distorted discourses about Saussure. This includes stating that Bally and Sechehaye added ideas that were not in the handwritten sources, how the order of ideas presented in the 3 courses was changed to emphasize the language and how it should be chosen as the object of study for linguistics. For critics, Saussure puts language and speaking at the same level in his manuscripts. The discourses that are being built now are that the CGL is a version / interpretation and this allowed us to glimpse that Saussure did not neglect the social of speech studies, mainly because he announced in the CGL the need for a linguistics of speaking. About this, we find Rastier (2015, p.26 *apud* CRUZ, 2016, p.31, emphasis of the author, our translation), who presents a relevant explanation for these events:

For François Rastier, ‘Bally and Sechehaye didn’t omit important points from the third course only, they also added passages on their own, which introduce serious confusion’ (Rastier, 2015: 26). Among these additions is, for example, the famous passage in the last paragraph of the Course, which reads in italics: ‘*Linguistics has as its only and true object the language considered in itself and by itself*’ (CGL, 317). As for the omissions, for example, the editors present the notion of speaking as belonging to a secondary domain of studies whereas, in manuscript sources, ‘for Saussure [it] is on an equal footing with the language and can occasionally become the determining element in the duality that forms with the language’ (Rastier, 2015: 26). Rastier mentions Saussure’s discourse here when creating the chair of Bally, in which Saussure says about linguistics: ‘It has two parts: one that is closer to language, passive deposit, the other that is closer to speaking, *active force and true origin of the phenomena that are perceived next, little by little in the other half of the language.*’²¹

On this subject, Calvet (1975) considers that the passages of the CGL should not be seen in such a Manichaeic way, in which language and speaking are on opposite sides. For the author, the image created from structural linguistics is full of stereotypes - Saussure excludes the social; the language must be studied by itself; among others - who were unable to explain linguistic facts in their diversity:

²¹ Original: “Para François Rastier, ‘Bally e Sechehaye não omitiram pontos importantes do terceiro curso apenas, eles também acrescentaram passagens por conta própria, que introduzem graves confusões’ (Rastier, 2015: 26). Entre esses acréscimos está, por exemplo, a famosa passagem no último parágrafo do Curso, onde se lê em itálico: ‘A linguística tem como único e verdadeiro objeto a língua considerada em si mesma e por si mesma’ (CLG, 317). Quanto às omissões, por exemplo, os editores apresentam a noção de fala como pertencendo a um domínio secundário de estudos ao passo que, nas fontes manuscritas, ‘para Saussure [ela] está em pé de igualdade com a língua e pode ocasionalmente tornar-se o elemento determinante na dualidade que forma com a língua’ (Rastier, 2015: 26). Rastier menciona aqui o discurso de Saussure quando da criação da cátedra de Bally, em que Saussure afirma a propósito da linguística: ‘Ela comporta duas partes: uma que é mais próxima da língua, depósito passivo, a outra que é mais próxima da fala, força ativa e verdadeira origem dos fenômenos que se percebem em seguida, pouco a pouco na outra metade da linguagem.’” (RASTIER, 2015, p.26 *apud* CRUZ, 2016, p.31).

For forty years, but forty years that have had enormous importance in the history of linguistics (from Bloomfield to Chomsky, from the Prague School to Martinet, through Hjelmslev, Benveniste, Firth and many others), this text will be admitted without problems, certainly not from the point of view of its content, we will see on the contrary that it has raised reservations, criticisms and refusals, but from the point of view of its constitution: it accedes very quickly to the status of a vulgar version of Saussurian thought, which is referred to in an almost religious way, to such an extent that certain Orthodox will make it a rule to follow scrupulously certain passages that were invented by publishers ... Thus, Saussure will pass to posterity in the form of about 300 printed pages after his death and his name will be associated with some oppositional concepts: *language / speaking, signifier / meaning, synchrony / diachrony* ... It is important to emphasize, even if it is evident that this image is posthumous. (CALVET, 1975, p.19, our translation)²²

For Calvet (1975), the emergence of systemic Saussure right from the start was due to the fact that the editors placed a strong emphasis on the system and the choice of how ideas appeared in the CGL was not by chance, it is driven by what the scholar calls the “Saussurean brand image”:

[...] the editors are marked by a fundamental idea which ‘*it is necessary to place oneself in the field of speech and take it as the norm of all other manifestations of speech*’ [CGL, p.16 (25)], an idea that reappears, reinforced, in the last sentence of the Course: ‘*linguistics has as its only and true object the language seen in itself and by itself*’ [p. 271 (371)]. Putting yourself right at the beginning of the field of language, starting with language, there is an evident desire to establish the autonomy of linguistics, to draw the limits of its field of intervention and to separate it from that of other sciences. (CALVET, 1975 p.22, our translation)²³

²² Original: “Durante quarenta anos, mas quarenta anos que tiveram enorme importância na história da lingüística (de Bloomfield a Chomsky, da Escola de Praga a Martinet, passando por Hjelmslev, Benveniste, Firth e muitos outros), esse texto será admitido sem problemas, não certamente do ponto de vista do seu conteúdo, veremos ao contrário que suscitou reservas, críticas e recusas, mas do ponto de vista da sua constituição: acede muito rapidamente ao estatuto de versão vulgata do pensamento saussuriano, à qual se faz referência de modo quase religioso, a tal ponto que certos ortodoxos farão para si uma regra para seguir escrupulosamente certas passagens que foram inventadas por editores...Assim, Saussure passará para a posteridade sob a forma de cerca de 300 páginas impressas após a sua morte e o seu nome ficará associado a alguns conceitos opositivos: *língua/fala, significante/significado, sincronia/diacronia...É importante salientar, mesmo se isso for evidente que essa imagem é póstuma.*” (CALVET, 1975, p.19).

²³ Original: “[...] os editores são marcados por uma idéia fundamental a qual ‘é preciso colocar-se logo de início no terreno da língua e tomá-la como norma de todas as outras manifestações da linguagem’ [CLG, p.16 (25)], idéia que reaparece, reforçada, na última frase do Curso: ‘a lingüística tem por único e verdadeiro objeto a língua encarada em si mesma e por si mesma’ [p. 271 (371)]. Colocar-se logo de início do terreno da língua, começar pela língua, há aí a vontade evidente de fundar a autonomia da lingüística, de traçar os limites do seu campo de intervenção e de separá-la do de outras ciências.” (CALVET, 1975 p.22).

In fact, Calvet (1975) agrees with the opinion of Jacqueline Fontaine, for whom: “Praguenses could be said, they used Saussure against the neogrammarians. They received from Saussure the inheritance of a linguistics separate from the disciples who had previously subjected it, reaching the state of science.” (CALVET, 1975 p.50, our translation).²⁴ These words allow us to glimpse that there was a struggle for the establishment of linguistic science through a structuralist ideological bias. In the name of these interests, the editors of the CGL silenced the social fact and highlighted certain statements in order to keep the systematic issue separate from history in evidence. It is as if there was a struggle between intellectual forces to see which group / ideology would win. In the name of misleading the sociological, psychological and naturalistic tendencies that were also in the dispute for the establishment of an autonomous science, language studies were linked to synchronic and systematic methodology and exteriority was rejected. As a consequence, this refusal hid

[...] the important fact that a language is spoken by people, in the midst of a society that is crossed by social conflicts, tensions, struggles, which is heir to a history and full of twists ... All of which, nobody ignores it and would not dare to deny it today, it is radically rejected by structuralism as it manifests in Hjelmslev: language has no society, it lives in the air, in space, far from the contingencies of time. (CALVET, 1975 p.51-52, our translation)²⁵

This interpretive gesture initiated by Bally and Sechehaye in the organization of the CGL had many adherents: the Pragueers, Hjelmslev, Martinet, making these ideas gain strength and circulate like the real thought of the time (FOUCAULT, 1998).

It was the search for the true Saussure that began with the discovery of manuscript sources that proved the focus of Saussurean research: the question of the linguistic sign and its value. However, throughout history, emphasis has been placed on the exclusion of the social fact in their studies. Calvet (1975) argues in favor of a social vision in Saussure because of the interest he showed in the areas of ethnology, history and sociology, showing that his thinking at CGL was forced, with excerpts added in the name of what we can call a policy of the autonomy of linguistic science:

Now, Saussure’s interests in ethnology, history, sociology [...] show that the CGL version forces his thinking. [...] The last sentence of the Course, regarding “*the language faced in itself and by itself*”, was entirely added

²⁴ Original: “Os praguenses poder-se-ia dizer, usaram Saussure contra os neogramáticos. Receberam de Saussure a herança de uma lingüística separada dos discípulos que antes a tinham sujeitado, atingindo o estado de ciência.” (CALVET, 1975 p.50).

²⁵ Original: “[...] o importante fato de que uma língua é falada por pessoas, no seio de uma sociedade que é atravessada por conflitos sociais, tensões, lutas, que é herdeira de uma história e cheia de reviravoltas...Tudo isso, que ninguém ignora e não ousaria hoje negar, é radicalmente rejeitado pelo estruturalismo tal como este se manifesta em Hjelmslev: a língua não tem sociedade, vive no ar, no espaço, longe das contingências do tempo.” (CALVET, 1975 p.51-52).

by the editors. But this is more the conclusion of the plan they have adopted than Saussure's thinking. And the *Course in General Linguistics* thus takes on a meaning that, without a doubt, it did not have in the mind of those who professed it: elaboration of theoretical foundations justifying the autonomy of linguistic science. For this reason, this discussion is much more than a quarrel of scholars: the editors, let us repeat, fabricated a Saussurian 'brand image' that passed on to posterity. The problem here is not so much to defend Saussure against the deformities of the CGL, but to follow the theoretical development of this brand image. We will see, in fact, that general linguistics is built on it. (CALVET, 1975, p.23, our translation).²⁶

Calvet (1975) considers that the falsification of Saussurian thought brought consequences: it restricted the point of view of linguistics and denied the external elements that intervene in the language. It is evident, recalls the author, that the social fact for Saussure has the meaning of his time. Calvet (1975) clarifies that, based entirely on Durkheim, the social fact for Saussure was defined as a type of collective representation / consciousness, in which the individual was unified in a group. In this sense, the social for the Geneva professor is not the social today:

This means that society was conceived in an idealistic way as the harmonious union of individuals under action that is at the same time ecumenical and coercive of social facts. Nothing that could suggest that society is crossed by conflicts, no reference, certainly, to an eventual class struggle. (CALVET, 1975, p.67, our translation)²⁷

The important thing is to think that structuralism was associated with the systematic study of language on account of the authors who developed linguistic studies following this aspect and not to extend this to Saussure. Followers of structuralism emphasized the code, what was linked to language and its system: "It is a pity that Saussure's heirs, conformists to the end, tried to carry out this semiology in a manner as reductive and scientist as they had done in their linguistics [...]" (CALVET, 1975 p.105, our

²⁶ Original: "Ora, os interesses de Saussure pela etnologia, pela história, pela sociologia [...], mostram que a versão do CLG força o seu pensamento. [...] a última frase do Curso, a respeito de "a língua encarada em si mesma e por si mesma", foi inteiramente acrescentada pelos editores. Mas esta é mais a conclusão do plano que adotaram do que o pensamento de Saussure. E o Curso de Linguística Geral assume, assim, um sentido que, sem dúvida, ele não tinha na mente de quem o professava: elaboração de fundamentos teóricos justificando a autonomia da ciência linguística. Por isso, essa discussão é muito mais que uma querela de eruditos: os editores, repetamos, fabricaram uma 'imagem de marca' saussuriana que passou para a posteridade. O problema aqui não é tanto defender Saussure contra as deformações do CLG, mas seguir o devir teórico dessa imagem de marca. Veremos, de fato, que é sobre ela que se construiu a linguística geral." (CALVET, 1975, p.23)

²⁷ Original: "Isso quer dizer que a sociedade era concebida de forma idealista como a harmoniosa união dos indivíduos sob a ação ao mesmo tempo ecumênica e coerciva dos fatos sociais. Nada que possa sugerir que a sociedade seja atravessada por conflitos, nenhuma referência, certamente, a uma eventual luta de classes". (CALVET, 1975, p.67).

translation)²⁸. From these discussions, it can be said that the way they interpreted Saussure defined how linguistic science developed. Today, with the theoretical maturation of a century of study, it is possible to see that Saussure sought a formal definition for the sign predominantly, in which he is defined as a mental entity; in the *Course*, the language is, mainly, an abstract set of signs. However, this does not mean that he neglected the historicity present there.

Chiss and Puech (1999) study the history of the CGL receptions and show how they were different, highlighting some problems, such as the questions raised above. The fact is that the entire course of study / reception by Saussure, involving Voloshinov, the Pragueers, Hjelmslev, Martinet, among others, justifies the interpretations made over these 100 years. It is not a case of saying that everything said about Saussure was a mistake; but to rethink such ideals and stop these Manichean discourses, as assessed by Calvet (1975), in Saussure's interpretations.

Reading Saussure and CGL today is different: it is to realize that the history of linguistics developed in the last 100 years has privileged some ideas and silenced others; it is to realize that some discourses about the foundation of linguistics were disseminated and defended that the Genevan professor, to found a science of the language, excluded the speaker and society. It is undeniable that the CGL has its legitimating value, that the Saussurean "exclusion" was important and that the studies carried out during all these years of interpretation were not in vain. Thanks to this Saussurean "exclusion", disciplines as important as Pragmatics, Discourse Analysis, Sociolinguistics, Theories of enunciation could emerge.

Saussure includes social fact in language studies

Next, we selected several passages taken from the CGL to show how Saussure, although not theorizing, approaches the social - society, the speaker and history - in the studies of the language he proposes. The purpose of this research is to deconstruct the discourses already crystallized on the method of work of the Genevan professor.

The excerpts presented prove that, in the CGL, there are several passages in which Saussure conceived the language as a social fact, relating it with the subjects and with the history. The *Course* dedicates many parts to approach this collective consciousness, the community of speakers, the coercive power that social factors have over the language.

We divided the quotes into 3 groups:

- a) the language presented as a social fact and linked to the speakers;
- b) the study of speech has two parts: speaking and language;
- c) the relation between language and history. Let's look at such passages:

²⁸ Original: "*Pena é que os herdeiros de Saussure, conformistas até o fim, tentaram realizar essa semiologia de modo tão redutor e cientista quanto tinham realizado a sua lingüística [...]*" (CALVET, 1975 p.105).

a) Quotations in which Saussure considers language as a social fact and linked to speakers (community of speakers, community, collectivity, collective contract, social convention, product of the collective mind, social body):

“Thanks to them, language is no longer looked upon as an organism that develops independently but as a product of the collective mind of linguistic groups.” (p. 5)

“[...] language is not an entity and exists only within speakers.” (p. 5, footnote)

The language [langue] “It is both a social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty.” (p. 9)

“But to understand clearly the role of the associative and coordinating faculty, we must leave the individual act, which is only the embryo of speech, and approach the social fact. [...]

When we hear people speaking a language that we do not know, we perceive the sounds but remain outside the social fact because we do not understand them.

Neither is the psychological part of the circuit wholly responsible: the executive side is missing, for execution is never-carried out by the collectivity. Execution is always individual, and the individual is always its master: I shall call the executive side speaking [parole]

Through the functioning of the receptive and co-ordinating faculties, impressions that are perceptibly the same for all are made on the minds of speakers. How can that social product be pictured in such a way that language will stand apart from everything else? If we could embrace the sum of word-images stored in the minds of all individuals, we could identify the social bond that constitutes language. It is a storehouse filled by the members of a given community through their active use of speaking, a grammatical system that has a potential existence in each brain, or, more specifically, in the brains of a group of individuals. For language is not complete in any speaker; it exists perfectly only within a collectivity.” (p. 13-14)

“It is the social side of speech, outside the individual who can never create nor modify it by himself; it exists only by virtue of a sort of contract signed by the members of a community.” (p. 14)

“Linguistic signs, though basically psychological, are not abstractions; associations which bear the stamp of collective approval-and which added together constitute language -are realities that have their seat in the brain.” (p. 15)

“[...] language is a social institution;” (p. 15)

“Language exists in the form of a sum of impressions deposited in the brain of each member of a community [...]. Language exists in each individual, yet is common to all. Nor is it affected by the will of the depositaries.” (p. 19)

“No individual, even if he willed it, could modify in any way at all the choice that has been made; and what is more, the community itself cannot control so much as a single word; it is bound to the existing language.” (p. 71)

“[...] we cannot control the linguistic sign [...]” (p. 71)

Language [...] is at every moment everybody’s concern; spread throughout society and manipulated by it, language is something used daily by all. (p. 73)

“[...] in language [...] everyone participates at all times, and that is why it is constantly being influenced by all. [...] Of all social institutions, language is least amenable to initiative. It blends with the life of society, and the latter, inert by nature, is a prime conservative force.[...]”

Language is checked not only by the weight of the collectivity but also by time. These two are inseparable. At every moment solidarity with the past checks freedom of choice. We say man and dog. This does not prevent the existence in the total phenomenon of a bond between the two antithetical forces-arbitrary convention by virtue of which choice is free and time which causes choice to be fixed.” (p. 74)

“Language is speech less speaking. It is the whole set of linguistic habits which allow an individual to understand and to be understood. 2) But this definition still leaves language outside its social context; it makes language something artificial since it includes only the individual part of reality; for the realization of language, a community of speakers [masse parlante] is necessary. Contrary to all appearances, language never exists apart from the social fact, for it is a semiological phenomenon. Its social nature is one of its inner characteristics. Its complete definition confronts us with two inseparable entities [language and community of speakers, *emphasis added*].” (p. 77)

In these passages we can clearly see the language linked to the social, the collective or the community of speakers. In this sense, the individual subject has no power over language: society is needed to validate linguistic elements. Furthermore, the question of arbitrariness is entirely social, since it needs collective ratification to function. The arbitrary proves that everything in the language needs the consensus of the speakers. Saussure recognizes the importance of collectivity in this process, contradicting the discourses which defend that he separated the social from the studies of linguistic science.

These quotes also demonstrate that there was no way for the Genevan professor to present in-depth theories on the subject, because the discussion on the relation

between language and society was still embryonic. Approaching the language from a social perspective is something that lacked many reflections that had not been realized at that time. Such a study was developed, as we know, decades later by theories such as Discourse Analysis, Sociolinguistics, among others. The fact that Saussure makes several mentions on the subject in the CGL is already an innovation for the time and helped to consolidate the relation of speech linked to society.

To better understand this scenario, we must take into account how the relation between social and language was treated in the late 18th century and early 19th century, when Saussure lived. This period is marked by the desire to free language from a naturalistic and representative view. An essential figure to be recovered in this battle is the American William W. Whitney (1827-1894). Whitney associates the concept of language with the social dimension, an innovative theme for the time. The direct contact with Whitney's ideas stimulated Saussurian thought. We only need to recapture the work *Ecrits de linguistique général*, in which Saussure presents two texts dedicated to Whitney: 'Notes for an article on Whitney' and 'Notes to the course II (1908-1909): Whitney', in which we find Saussure reflecting on the American's ideas. In the CGL, there is mention of the author: "Whitney, to whom language is one of several social institutions [...]" (SAUSSURE, 1959, p.10). In this sense, the innovative relation proposed by Whitney between language and society is not disregarded by Saussure, especially the fact that language is considered a social institution.

Whitney worked hard to combat naturalist tendencies and to remove linguistics from areas such as biology and botany. Based on Whitney's research, speech studies changed course: they left the field of natural facts to subscribe to historical and social facts and to find the definition of language as a system. By challenging the perspective of language as a living and independent organism of the speaker, Whitney helped Saussure to reflect on an innovative vision in which language was linked to the social dimension. From this innovation, man and language were removed from natural discourses and relocated under the aegis of historical and social discourses. Saussure was aware of this historical scenario and did not fail to address such events in his studies.

Whitney, when discussing the social function of language, also breaks with the comparative tradition of the time. For the author, language is seen as a communication tool and the need to communicate is a social function of language. Whitney regards it as an institution, in which its signs are both conventional and arbitrary. This author also has the idea that we have other forms of expression, such as gestures, intonation, among others, that help ordinary speech. For Paveau and Sarfati (2006, p.41, our translation): "It is clear that, on these fundamental points, Saussure [...] remains deeply indebted for some of his fundamental theses to Whitney's predecessor reflection."²⁹ The formulation of *language as a social institution* and other Whitney theories pleased Saussure and served as an inspiration for the CGL: "We will find this way of proceeding in the Cours

²⁹ Original: "É patente que, nesses pontos fundamentais, Saussure [...] continua profundamente devedor de algumas de suas teses fundamentais à reflexão predecessora de Whitney." (PAVEAU; SARFATI, 2006, p.41).

de linguistique générale [...] (PAVEAU; SARFATI, 2006, p.37, our translation)³⁰.” For Faraco (2007), this is the centerpiece in Saussurean linguistics, which defends the need for an autonomous science of speech that should be differentiated from the historical-comparative view and be independent of the natural sciences and psychology.

The Genevan professor defined, in this sense, the object of study of linguistics, realizing its social character. The need for a theory of semiology, proposed by Saussure, attests that the professor was attentive to this issue.

b) Quotations in which Saussure considers that the study of speech has two parts: speaking and language

“Speech has both an individual and a social side, and we cannot conceive of one without the other.” (p. 8)

“The study of speech is then twofold: its basic part—having as its object language, which is purely social and independent of the individual—is exclusively psychological; its secondary part—which has as its object the individual side of speech, i.e. speaking, including phonation—is psychophysical. Doubtless the two objects are closely connected, each depending on the other: language is necessary if speaking is to be intelligible and produce all its effects; but speaking is necessary for the establishment of language, and historically its actuality always comes first.” (p. 18)

“Finally, speaking is what causes language to evolve: impressions gathered from listening to others modify our linguistic habits. Language and speaking are then interdependent; the former is both the instrument and the product of the latter.” (p. 19)

The quotes above claim that, in practice, there is no way to separate language from speaking. These two elements are closely intertwined and Saussure has not neglected this issue. You can only separate the language from the speaking for a methodological issue, scientific procedures. The discourse disseminated for so long that the mentioned author excluded speaking from language studies was probably constituted with the purpose of eliminating once and for all the metaphysical, psychological and naturalistic intentions of studying language, since such practices confused the establishment of objective scientific practices that were sought to constitute a science in the positivist molds of the time. Saussure was aware of the urgency of establishing an epistemological break with the studies of language. Language and speaking should not be studied separately at all times, but it was necessary to define this element of study in an abstract way, as a methodological practice in order to overturn once and for all the lines of thought of the scholars of that time who also worked to build a linguistic science.

³⁰ Original: “*Encontraremos essa maneira de proceder no Cours de linguistique générale [...]*” (PAVEAU; SARFATI, 2006, p.37).

c) Quotations in which Saussure highlights the relation between language and history, placing them as inseparable, differently of an idea of opposition:

“Speech always implies both an established system and an evolution; at every moment it is an existing institution and a product of the past. To distinguish between the system and its history, between what it is and what it was, seems very simple at first glance; actually the two things are so closely related that we can scarcely keep them apart.” (p. 8)

“A particular language-state is always the product of historical forces, and these forces explain why the sign is unchangeable, i.e. why it resists any arbitrary substitution.” (p. 72)

“But to say that language is a product of social forces does not suffice to show clearly that it is unfree; remembering that it is always the heritage of the preceding period, we must add that these social forces are linked with time. Language is checked not only by the weight of the collectivity but also by time. These two are inseparable. At every moment solidarity with the past checks freedom of choice. We say man and dog. This does not prevent the existence in the total phenomenon of a bond between the two antithetical forces-arbitrary convention by virtue of which choice is free and time which causes choice to be fixed.” (p. 74)

“Time changes all things; there is no reason why language should escape this universal law.” (p.77)

“[...]it is rather the action of -time combined with the social force. If time is left out, the linguistic facts are incomplete and no conclusion is possible. (p. 78)

“If we considered language in time, without the community of speakers-imagine an isolated individual living for several centuries-we probably would notice no change; time would not influence language. Conversely, if we considered the community of speakers without considering time, we would not see the effect of the social forces that influence language. [...] Language is no longer free, for time will allow the social forces at work on it to carry out their effects. This brings us back to the principle of continuity, which cancels freedom. But continuity necessarily implies change, varying degrees of shifts in the relationship between the signified and the signifier.” (p. 78)

The selected quotations prove that there is no way for the language to separate itself from the historical forces as declared in the discourse which we see circulating on this subject. Terms such as *evolution*, *product of the past*, *history*, *what was*, *product of historical factors*, *inheritance from a previous era*, *time*, among others, show that history is constitutive of language and does not exist without the other. Saussure made

it very clear that “[...] time changes all things; there is no reason why language should escape this universal law.” (SAUSSURE, 1959, p.77).

For a long time it was said that Saussure excluded history, society and the speaker from the studies of linguistic science. However, with the maturing that took place in the last century, it is time to abandon such statements, as the discussion developed so far has proven. From there, there is no way for the speaker to put the system into operation following his conscience and will other than by linguistic and social rules as well. Breaking both rules has consequences for speakers: not being able to communicate, not understanding the other, misunderstanding, mistake, unexpected senses are some of the punishments that the individual may suffer. In this way, the linguistic system is linked to social conventions, to the collective standard established by each community.

Émile Durkheim (1984), when defining social facts as the object of study of sociology, explains that society is something that exists independently of the will of individuals, being endowed with coercive powers that go beyond the individual will. Saussure approaches Durkheim’s ideas and defines language as a social fact that exists not by individual will, but by social forces. Consequently, these theorists deny the psychological subject, fleeing the psyche. Both Durkheim and Saussure made cuts to establish the sciences they defended, at a time when the humanities were also trying to establish themselves. Denying the individual to defend the social was the path these authors took to establish their scientific fields. About this, Silva and Milani (2011, p.13) state that:

If language is a social fact whose nature fits Durkheim’s description - there is no other definition - then it is not surprising that Saussure is often accused of having suppressed the role of the individual in studies of a linguistic nature. R. Lafont and F. Gardès-Madray (1976, p. 13 *apud* FIORIN, 2002, p. 29), for example, argued that “the *langue / parole* opposition allows to eliminate the speaker of linguistic investigation”. Also, confront Marina Yaguello’s statement on the active role of the speaking individual: “the speaker - through which social relations are also expressed -, long distanced from Linguistics, was introduced by Sociolinguistics in it and this resulted a redefinition of the very object of this science”(YAGUELLO *apud* FIORIN, 2002, p.27, our translation).³¹

³¹ Original: “*Se a língua é um fato social cuja natureza se encaixa na descrição feita por Durkheim – não há outra definição –, então, não surpreende o fato de que, frequentemente, Saussure seja acusado de ter suprimido o papel do indivíduo nos estudos de natureza linguística. R. Lafont e F. Gardès-Madray (1976, p. 13 apud FIORIN, 2002, p. 29), por exemplo, argumentaram que “a oposição langue/parole permite eliminar o falante da investigação linguística”. Confronte, além disso, a declaração de Marina Yaguello, sobre o papel ativo do indivíduo falante: “o falante – por meio do qual se exprimem também as relações sociais –, por longo tempo afastado da Linguística, nela foi introduzido pela Sociolinguística e disso resultou uma redefinição do próprio objeto dessa ciência”.* (YAGUELLO *apud* FIORIN, 2002, p.27).

On this subject, Gadet (1987) reveals that, in his manuscripts, Saussure analyzed the language as having a collective and an individual aspect. However, in the CGL, this freedom of the speaker was attributed only to speaking. As a consequence, the interpretation made is that only speaking carries that individual side, generating a distortion of the ideas of the Genevan professor. In addition, the author analyzes, Saussure would have said that the distinction between speaking and language was of the first magnitude. This fact justifies the exaggeration seen in the CGL about this. What may have generated the interpretations mentioned here is the lack of development that we found in the *Course* on these issues. There are quotes, mentions of the language linked to society, but they were not theorized by Saussure: as we have seen, there is no effective elaboration on the subject. Another factor is that the theorizations about the sign point to a systematic view of the language.

The publication of the book *Ecrits de linguistique général* (ELG) came to unmake the confusions produced by CGL and confirm that speaking could not be considered a secondary element. From the ELG, it was possible to see that Saussure defended a linguistics of the language inseparable from the linguistics of speaking. In this sense, the author believes in the double essence of speech, thus not excluding speaking from his studies:

[...] I don't remember Saussure having excluded aspects related to social interaction from the horizon of his concerns. In my interpretation of 'social' in Saussure - there are many occurrences in the CGL of 'social' linked to the language: 'social fact' (CGL, 21), 'social reality' (CGL, 92), 'social product' (CGL, 17), 'social institution' (CGL, 24) etc. -, it is not a question of denying society's role in linguistic change and variation. Against this, Saussure strives to show that society is present at a fundamental level, in the means that society is a condition for the existence of language. In other words, Saussure removes from the synchronic linguistics the social as a causality of explanation of the system of values that constitute a language synchronously, without, however, failing to emphasize that signs only exist in the community of speakers, which is social and which places the language in use in the exchange that is the *parole*. The terms of this formulation that I give to the "social", in Saussure, need, at least, to be considered, when what is on screen is the criticism of a supposed absence of this aspect in the theory of the Genevan. (FLORES, 2016, p.75, our translation).³²

³² Original: "[...] não me lembro de Saussure ter excluído do horizonte de suas preocupações os aspectos ligados à interação social. Na interpretação que faço do 'social' em Saussure - há muitas ocorrências, no CLG, de 'social' ligado à língua: 'fato social' (CLG, 21), 'realidade social' (CLG, 92), 'produto social' (CLG, 17), 'instituição social' (CLG, 24) etc. -, não se trata de negar o papel da sociedade na mudança e na variação linguística. Na contramão disso, Saussure esforça-se para mostrar que a sociedade está presente em um nível fundamental, na medida em que a sociedade é condição de existência da língua. Em outras palavras, Saussure retira da linguística sincrônica o social como causalidade de explicação do sistema de valores que constituem sincronicamente uma língua, sem, no entanto,

What Flores (2016) demonstrates in this quote is that, due to the search for a strictly scientific method of linguistic analysis, Saussure proceeds to separate language and speaking, without, however, omitting that society is a condition for the existence of language. About this, Coseriu (1980, p.220, our translation) states that there are two notions of language in the CGL which do not entirely coincide, in which Saussure: [...] makes an effort to combine two different oppositions: achievement / system and individual / community [...].”³³ This fact was not noticed at the time and the quotes presented prove that the language cannot exist outside its historicity.

Saussure does not really elaborate methodological concepts about the social in the CGL, since his concern is to discuss the linguistic sign and the question of its value. However, the fact that he recognizes that the language is social by nature, shows that the sign is socially immersed: without the community of speakers there is no life for the sign. Saussure, recognizing the need for linguistics of speaking, establishes two levels of study for speech: language and speaking. The referred author goes beyond the limits of linguistic studies when he says that linguistics is a branch of a broader science, semiology, which aims to study “[...] *the life of signs within society* [...]” (SAUSSURE, 1959, p.16).

Conclusions

By breaking with the comparative practices of the time, Saussure, from the notion of value, argues that meaning is built by the opposition relations that are established within the linguistic system. Because of this systematic view, the Genevan professor, when he was unable to conclude his ideas due to his premature death, opened fissures for purely systematic interpretations and statements that he had excluded the social fact from language studies. It is necessary to understand the concept of collective for Saussure: it is a kind of presupposed element that the bearer of the system needs to share. This is not a “social” theoretically defined as a set of practices. As this was not understood right from the start, the image was constructed that he neglected the social fact in speech studies. As we have seen, when discussing the dependence on the collective contract, on the community of speakers, on social constraints, Saussure realized that, for these systematic relations to work, social ratification was necessary.

The first interpretations made about the *Course*, the result of the historicity of the time, acted on the discourse, creating an image for the Swiss professor who reverberated for a century. As a consequence, Saussure’s true research nucleus was not immediately clear, requiring many discussions and debates until arrived at the following: the notion

deixar de enfatizar que os signos têm existência apenas na massa falante, que é social e que coloca a língua em uso na troca que é a parole. Os termos dessa formulação que dou para o “social”, em Saussure, precisam, ao menos, ser considerados, quando o que está em tela é a crítica de uma suposta ausência desse aspecto na teoria do genebrino.” (FLORES, 2016, p.75).

³³ Original: “[...] *faz um esforço para combinar duas oposições diferentes: realização/sistema e indivíduo/comunidade* [...].” (COSERIU, 1980, p.220).

of the value of the elements that compose a system of socially conventional signs. In this sense, seeing language as a value system eliminates the need to resort to the speaker's subjectivity. Seeing a speaker who obeys the order of the language, its socially established rules, eliminates the need to consider his intentions. Saussure is immersed in an era when subjectivity, metaphysics, naturalism, in short, other lines of thought were competing to establish a linguistic science. Saussure realized that it was necessary to leave the appeal to the subject and his intention at that historical moment when so many theories (metaphysics, idealism, naturalism) were competing.

As it was possible to perceive with this work, the CGL deconstructs the image that Saussure excludes the social, that the only and true object of study of linguistics is the language considered in itself and which we have seen circulating in recent decades. From these discussions, it is imperative to rethink the subject so that we can no longer repeat these reductionist discourse about the referred author. The glimpsed problem is that, after discovering the manuscript sources, this early discourse continued to be propagated. Often, there was no correction and update of what was said about Saussure. It is necessary that language scholars update their learning about the Genevan professor and start to produce knowledge on the subject from the Saussurean studies that were formed in the last decades. This concern is justified by the extensive development of linguistic studies over the 100 years since the publication of the CGL. The amount of knowledge produced in the last century does not allow linguistic science to be conceived in the same way as it was done in 1916.

BONÁCIO, D. É preciso reinterpretar o conceito de fato social em saussure? *Alfa*, São Paulo, v.65, 2021.

- RESUMO: As ideias de Saussure publicadas no CLG produziram um acontecimento discursivo e fizeram circular o discurso o qual defende que, ao excluir a fala do objeto de estudo da linguística, Saussure excluiu o fato social das ciências da linguagem (Meillet, Voloshinov). Passados 100 anos dessa publicação, questionamo-nos se é preciso reinterpretar o conceito de fato social em Saussure. Nossa indagação se baseia principalmente em passagens do CLG que comprovam o quanto Saussure esteve preocupado com essa questão, quando apresentou os conceitos de massa falante, o caráter coletivo do signo linguístico, língua como instituição social e também por conta das influências de autores que lidaram com tal assunto como Durkheim e Whitney. O objetivo desse artigo é problematizar esse discurso posto como evidente, ao refletir sobre a questão do fato social no linguista suíço. Para realizar essa pesquisa, coletamos enunciados do CLG e contrapomos com críticas de estudiosos da língua, os quais defendem que Saussure realizou a exclusão do fato social na constituição da ciência linguística. A partir dessa pesquisa, pudemos compreender que ele não negligenciou o fato social, pelo contrário, ao discorrer sobre a dependência do contrato coletivo, Saussure percebeu que, para as relações sistemáticas funcionarem, era preciso da ratificação social.
- PALAVRAS-CHAVE: fato social; Saussure; curso de linguística geral; análise do discurso.

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