

A JOURNEY AMONGST WORDS: INTERVIEW WITH GRAÇA RIO-TORTO*

Mailson LOPES**

Presentation

This interview, conceived as a concise dialogue, as well as offering researchers and those interested in Portuguese morphology a synthesis of the thoughts of one of the greatest morphologists of this language regarding some issues of interest to the field, will also serve as a due tribute of recognition to her brilliant and inspiring career of five decades dedicated to Linguistics, namely word formation in the Portuguese vernacular. It is hoped that the questions reproduced will be useful to the readers by presenting a condensed version of Dr. Graça Rio-Torto's understanding of some important aspects of the field of linguistic studies in general and morphological studies in particular.

* Graça Maria de Oliveira e Silva Rio-Torto (Coimbra, 1956) is a retired Full Professor of Linguistics at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Coimbra, where she has taught since 1979. She graduated in Romance Philology a year earlier, in 1978, and obtained her doctorate in 1993, defending her thesis entitled *Formação de palavras em português: aspectos da construção de avaliativos* [Word formation in Portuguese: aspects of evaluative construction]. In 2005, with unanimous approval, she obtained her academic title of Aggregation and, crowning her brilliant career, she became Professor of Linguistics at her alma mater. She has held numerous positions at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Coimbra (FLUC), including the scientific coordination of the Center for the Study of General and Applied Linguistics - CELGA (1997–1999), the direction of the Institute of Portuguese Language and Literature D. Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcelos (2000–2002), founding and directing the Master's Degree in Linguistics and Teaching (2004–2006) and the Postgraduate Course in Linguistics and Teaching (2004–2005) - renamed the 2nd Cycle Course in Linguistics (2004–2006) -, directing the Portuguese as a Foreign Language Courses at FLUC (2013–2016) and directing the PhD Course in Portuguese Linguistics (2018–2022). With more than half a hundred articles and book chapters published, her main works include the book *Morfologia derivacional: teoria e aplicação ao português* [Derivational morphology: theory and application to Portuguese] (1998), the already classic *Gramática derivacional do português* [Derivational grammar of Portuguese] (1st edition: 2013; 2nd edition: 2016) — coordinated by her — and, more recently, the books *Prefixação na língua portuguesa contemporânea* [Prefixation in contemporary Portuguese] (2019) and *Português brasileiro e português europeu: um diálogo de séculos* [Brazilian Portuguese and European Portuguese: a centuries-long dialogue] (2022) — coordinated by her. She has also supervised dozens of master's and doctoral dissertations and several post-doctoral studies. She has collaborated in research and academic activities with foreign universities, namely in Brazil, China, Spain, France and Mozambique. She is a member of several research groups in Portugal, other European countries and Brazil (USP, UFBA). In short, she is one of the most respected researchers in her field in the Portuguese-speaking world and is undoubtedly the leading exponent of lexical morphology studies in Portugal and one of the most important in this field in the Western world.

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MAILSON LOPES: It is well known that there are phenomena which, although they are neither rare nor unimportant in the functioning of the language(s), are relegated to the margins of linguistic research, never or almost never featuring as an object of scientific study in research proposed or undertaken in the area (Joseph, 1997; Dingemanse, 2017). They would be marginalia in linguistic science. In your opinion, what are the phenomena or topics in lexical morphology of Portuguese that would fit in this description and therefore deserve greater attention from scholars in the discipline?

GRAÇA RIO-TORTO: Before I begin, allow me, dear Mailson, to thank you for your immense generosity towards me, for taking the initiative of this interview, which I am very honored and delighted to grant, first and foremost because it allows us to get even closer as researchers and as friends. I fondly remember the academic year in which you were working hard at the University of Coimbra, writing your doctoral dissertation, supervised by Prof. Juliana Soledade (UFBA) and myself, a year that enabled us to strengthen our professional and personal relationships.

Now to answer your question: in life, as in science, I don't like to see sectors, phenomena or facts relegated to *marginalia*. According to Dingemanse (2017, p. 195), based on Joseph (1997), "Marginalia are typologically unexceptional phenomena that many linguists think can be ignored without harm to linguistic inquiry. They are not rare, but linguistic practice assigns them to the margin by consensus." Now, these are facts/phenomena that are not exceptional, but which, for non-scientific reasons, are consensually ignored by the academic community. I abhor prejudice, including linguistic prejudice. That is why I refuse to even mention facts or phenomena that, due to a certainly unscientific representation or belief, are being — let alone deserve to be — less considered by research. Since the functioning of a language is based on a network of interconnections supported by systematicity, diversity and holisticity, everything in it matters, so we cannot discard facts or data or polarize the most and least relevant. It is one thing whether facts are more or less representative, but it's quite another to consider that their contribution is at a lower (or higher) level of relevance for the game of language and interaction. For example: would the mesoclisism of clitics that occurs in the cultured European Portuguese, in the future and in the conditional (*dir-lhe-ei, dir-lhe-ia, dir-se-ia, caber-te-á, caber-te-ia, falar-nos-emos, falar-nos-íamos, ver-vos-íamos*), fit into this set of marginalia, because it is restricted to such contexts? What about all the multiple theoretical implications it has and the specificity it entails for the European variant of the Portuguese language?

MAILSON LOPES: Based on your decades of experience studying and researching morphology, what do you think are the most complex and difficult topics or aspects to investigate and explain in morphological theory?

GRAÇA RIO-TORTO: Instead of morphological theory, I would prefer to talk about morphological theories, because there are so many, and they are not always compatible with each other. In any case, I believe that theories or analysis models (Distributed Morphology, Construction Morphology, etc.) pass, and the data remain. However, there is no science without theoretical frames of reference. Morphological theories vary according to theories of language and, for me, I do not rule out the possibility that they all contain relevant aspects or perspectives. Anyone who has witnessed, as I have, the confrontation between synchronicist theories and historicist theories, the heated battles between structuralists and generativists or between functionalists and pragmaticists, the dawn of Cognitive Linguistics, Construction Grammar, Construction Morphology and, more recently, Relational Morphology, can only welcome the theoretical diversity available, and the inherent difficulty of situating morphological theory within a theory of language that does justice to the place that morphology has in many languages and, at the same time, does not neglect the other components of explicit and mental grammar. The place of morphology in the architecture and functioning of languages, (in) its network of correlations with syntax, semantics, pragmatics, remain highly complex aspects for any morphological theory. Rather than researching morphology, I like to say that I study the processes and patterns of lexical construction. Such a study involves morphology, semantics, syntax, pragmatics and the history of language, in a whole that I called in my doctoral thesis (Rio-Torto, 1993) *polydimensional* and *interactive*. Thus, in terms of language theory, its architecture, space and interaction between phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics, and the way in which these interconnections are processed, will certainly gather a lot of research for many years to come. In a more micro domain, frontier categories, such as prepositions and prefixes, erudite radicals, splinters and compounds, compounds and syntagmas, are areas of great empirical and theoretical effervescence that will continue to arouse great investment on the part of linguists.

Nevertheless, there are also important and far-reaching aspects of morphology that I must mention. There are essential areas of linguistic research that require multidisciplinary teams, such as how the lexicon is acquired (even in the mother tongue), the processing of lexical units, their memorization, how they are accessed, and these are areas that will certainly continue to be widely explored, benefiting from the contributions of knowledge in morphology, while at the same time amplifying and densifying it. Artificial intelligence applied to natural languages cannot do without the data and mechanisms with which the morphology and syntax of languages operate. Being domains of great complexity, also because they are very interdisciplinary, they represent, together with the Biology of language and Neurolinguistics, areas of knowledge of the greatest relevance to better understand how human beings function.

MAILSON LOPES: In your passage through various institutions and foreign countries, and in addition to your strong connections with Brazil, Mozambique and China, your vigorous dialogue with morphologists from Spain is noteworthy. This has recently been demonstrated, for example, by the fact that you gave the inaugural lecture at the *XII Encuentro de Morfólogos de España* (Santiago de Compostela, 2016) and for being the author (together with Prof. Ramón Mariño Paz) of the section *In memoriam* to the notable Prof. Jesús Pena (1947-2021) — one of the greatest Spanish morphologists — in the most recent issue of the journal *Verba* (n° 49, 2022), which he had directed. Could you comment in more detail on your academic-intellectual experiences with Spanish morphologists? And what do you think of the research and development of studies in the field of Romance lexical morphology, namely those of a comparative nature between Portuguese, Galician and Spanish?

GRAÇARIO-TORTO: My academic-intellectual experience with Spanish morphologists was and continues to be very enriching, both academically and personally.

When I started teaching at the University of Coimbra, in 1979, I was in charge of an annual 1st cycle course unit, “*Fonética e Morfologia do Português*” [Portuguese Phonetics and Morphology]. In my academic training in Romance Philology, the subjects of morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics were absent. It fell upon me, therefore, the task of inaugurating the design and planning of a semester-long Morphology module. At the time, there were few non-historicist studies available on the morphology of contemporary Portuguese, which is why, in addition to the seminal book by M. Aronoff (1976), I resorted to the teachings of Mattoso Câmara Jr., and the publications of Jesús Pena, *Usos anómalos de los sustantivos verbales en el español actual* (1976) and *La derivación en español: verbos derivados y sustantivos verbales* (1980). This was the beginning of an intense decades-long dialogue with my esteemed friend Jesús Pena, joined by other big names in Spanish morphology, such as Soledad Varela and her students, as well as the numerous and prolific scholars of morphology gathered in the *Red Temática Española de Morfología* (RETEM),¹ of which the group I coordinate at the University of Coimbra is also a member. The lessons learned and the interaction established with colleagues and students from the various Spanish universities represented in this *Red Temática* are of the utmost importance. In addition to the *Encontros Anuais de Morfologia* [annual Morphology Meetings], we have (and provide) access to researchers and research of excellence in the specific area, in which we can participate, which is a unique asset in our university life and in our interpersonal worldview. The exchange of knowledge has been constant, manifesting itself at various levels, and has always been welcomed by CELGA-ILTEC,² the research center to which I have always belonged.

¹ Available at: <http://hispanicasuam.es/RETEM/>. Access on: 2 Dec. 2023.

² Available at: <http://celga-iltec.uc.pt>. Access on: 2 Dec. 2023.

Close contact with university colleagues from various European countries has been equally intense within the framework of the *Red Temática Lengua y Ciencia* [Language and Science/Ciencia Thematic Network],³ coordinated by Cecilio Garriga, from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. This European Thematic Network includes several research groups from various universities and, as far as the Portuguese group is concerned, its aim is to study and make known the lexicons of Science and Technology over the centuries, in different cultural universes, their connections and their interferences. Following one of the regular meetings of this Thematic Network, which was organized by the University of Coimbra group, the volume *Léxico de la Ciencia: tradición y modernidad* [Science Lexicon: tradition and modernity] was published (Rio-Torto, 2012). More recently, the volume *El portugués de especialidad en las ciencias de la salud y de la vida* [Specialty Portuguese in the health and life sciences] (Rio-Torto; Rodrigues, 2020) was published in Barcelona by Tremédica, which brings together contributions from colleagues from Coimbra, Brazil and Évora to the knowledge of some lexicons of specialty in the health and life sciences.

With regard to the last aspect you mention, the Romance studies of lexical morphology devoted to comparative descriptions of Portuguese, Galician and Spanish are of vital importance. As your doctoral dissertation clearly shows, and let me quote it — *Estudo histórico-comparativo da prefixação no galego-português e no castelhano arcaicos (séculos XIII-XVI): aspetos morfolexicais, semânticos e etimológicos* [Historical-comparative study of prefixation in archaic Galician-Portuguese and Castilian (13th-16th centuries): morpholexical, semantic and etymological aspects] (Lopes, 2018), a co-supervised doctorate between the Universidade Federal da Bahia (Doctorate in Language and Culture) and the University of Coimbra (Doctorate in Portuguese Linguistics) — at the genesis of present-day Castilian, Galician and Portuguese are Old Castilian and Galician-Portuguese, so the inflections, contacts and interference that the languages have registered since then are crucial to understand how they function today. Romance studies, which in the 20th century fell out of favor with researchers, are gradually regaining their rightful place in the spectrum of interlinguistic research.

MAILSON LOPES: Your connections with Brazilian linguists are long-standing and very fruitful, continuing to this day. Could you comment on these partnerships? What's more, from your visit to Brazil and your careful observation of the morphology of Brazilian Portuguese, which aspects would you point out as being the most salient (either because of their similarities or dissimilarities) when comparing the morpholexical process of Brazilian Portuguese on one hand, and the lexical-morphological mechanisms of European Portuguese on the other?

³ Available at: <https://www.lenguayciencia.net>. Access on: 2 Dec. 2023.

GRAÇA RIO-TORTO: My contacts with Brazilian scientific production go back to my undergraduate studies, because there we learned to interact with the biggest names in Brazilian Philology and Linguistics, such as Serafim da Silva Neto, Said Ali, Mattoso Câmara, Evanildo Bechara (with whom I later had the privilege of getting to know, when he was a professor for a few years at the University of Coimbra), to name but a few. When I started researching morphology and word formation, I came into contact with the production of Antônio José Sandmann (*Formação de palavras no português brasileiro contemporâneo*, 1988) [Word formation in contemporary Brazilian Portuguese], and Margarida Basilio, who in 1987, sent me, with a dedication, her seminal *Teoria Lexical* [Lexical theory]. We hadn't met in person yet, but we already exchanged letters, with me sending my first texts and asking for her opinion, and Prof. Margarida shared the articles she was publishing. At that time, I was already beginning to be supervised by my dear Prof. Danielle Corbin, from the University of Lille, who defended her doctoral thesis on January 7, 1987, and to whose SILEX group, which she founded and led masterfully, I belonged until her untimely death. I am very proud to have disseminated my great teacher's thinking in Brazil, a pioneer for the Portuguese-speaking world at the time, having sent the thesis to colleagues such as Margarida Basilio, Maria Tereza Biderman, and to libraries such as USP (University of São Paulo) and UNESP (State University of São Paulo, Araraquara campus), where I taught in 1996. With this teaching experience, in the Postgraduate Course of *Faculdade de Ciências e Letras* — Araraquara Campus of the *Universidade Estadual Paulista* “Júlio de Mesquita Filho”, I had the opportunity to get to know more closely three leading professors of Brazilian Linguistics, to whom I pay homage here: Maria Helena de Moura Neves, Maria Tereza Camargo Biderman and Ieda Maria Alves. From all of them I received a lifelong friendship. At the same time, it was possible to start applying Danielle Corbin's theory, which I was following at the time with some adaptations, to Brazilian Portuguese, since that academic semester is the genesis of some doctoral dissertations. Contacts with Brazil intensified, both with USP and UFBA [Federal University of Bahia]. Following his post-doctorate, under my supervision, at the University of Coimbra, Prof. Mário Viaro, coordinator of the Núcleo de Apoio à Pesquisa em Etimologia e História da Língua Portuguesa (NEHiLP) [Research Support Center for Etymology and History of the Portuguese Language], at the University of São Paulo (USP), invited me to become a scientific consultant for the *Grupo de Morfologia Histórica do Português* [Portuguese Historical Morphology Group].⁴ From our interaction, I would highlight the research projects in mind, the training of postgraduate students, the fruitful experience of jointly supervising doctoral theses and the evaluation of others in transatlantic committees. The collaboration with the *Universidade Federal da Bahia* (UFBA) began with the contact of the late Prof. Rosa Virgínia Mattos e Silva to co-supervise, at the University of Coimbra, Prof. Juliana Soledade and Prof. Antonia Vieira dos Santos, who worked on lexical formation patterns in Old Portuguese, with the respective theses *Semântica*

⁴ Available at: <http://www.usp.br/gmhp>. Access on: 2 Dec. 2023.

morfolexical: contribuições para a descrição do paradigma sufixal do português arcaico [Morpholexical semantics: contributions to the description of the suffixal paradigm in archaic Portuguese] (Soledade, 2004) and *Compostos sintagmáticos nominais VN, NN, NA, AN e NprepN no português arcaico (sécs. XIII-XV)* [Nominal syntagmatic compounds VN (Verb – Noun), NN (Noun – Noun), NA (Noun – Adjective), AN (Adjective – Noun) and NprepN (Noun – Preposition – Noun) in Old Portuguese (13th-15th centuries)] (Santos, 2009). More recently, I had the opportunity to co-supervise, with Prof. Juliana Soledade, this illustrious interviewer, Mailson Lopes, whose doctoral thesis, entitled *Estudo histórico-comparativo da prefixação no galego-português e no castelhano arcaicos (séculos XIII a XVI): aspetos morfolexicais, semânticos e etimológicos* (Lopes, 2018), was selected by the Postgraduate Program in Language and Culture (PPGLINC/UFBA) to compete for the CAPES Thesis Award – 2019 Edition. One project I'm very interested in is the *Novo Dicionário de Nomes em Uso no Brasil* [New Dictionary of names in use in Brazil],⁵ coordinated by Juliana Soledade.

In the field of Brazilian morphology, another outstanding name, and one with whom I have had the privilege of working, is Prof. Carlos Alexandre Gonçalves, from the *Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro* (UFRJ) [Federal University of Rio de Janeiro], leader of the *Núcleo de Estudos Morfológicos do Português* [Center for Portuguese Morphological Studies] and a major promoter of Construction Morphology in Brazil. With this esteemed colleague, I had the opportunity to coordinate a symposium on morphological studies, which gave rise to the language dossier (p. 147-568) of volume 23 of the journal *Revista Diadorim* (Gonçalves; Rio-Torto; Tavares, 2021). Since Construction Grammar applied to morphology is currently dominant in Brazil, it is clear that the studies we are doing in partnership with Brazilian colleagues benefit greatly from this theoretical influx. I do not reject this model, not least because I witnessed some of the first theoretical debates between D. Corbin and G. Booij on the eminent Dutch linguist's emerging conceptions of Construction Morphology. However, as I am intrinsically averse to theoretical constraints, I prefer to maintain my conceptual autonomy which allows me to incorporate what I consider to be explanatorily relevant in each theoretical construct.

Regarding your last point, about which aspects are most salient between the morpholexical processes of BP and those of EP, I'll start by saying that making generalizations without a solid statistical basis is always a delicate and risky process. It is not possible to compare the mass of lexical constructions available in Brazil with those in Portugal, unless we take into account the lexical units collected over Portugal's many centuries of history. In any case, since it is the same language, the genolexical processes must not be too different overall, otherwise there will be a rupture. The Portuguese language spoken in Brazil is, like Castilian in the Americas, or English in the USA or Australia,

⁵ Available at: <https://dicionariodenomesdobrasil.com.br>. Access on: 2 Dec. 2023.

more innovative and tends to be less complex than the source variant that gave rise to it. This does not mean that the lexical morphology is very divergent, in terms of processes and construction patterns, with derivation (by suffixation or prefixation), compounding, lexical fusion, truncation, etc. coexisting in both countries. It sometimes happens that in BP the affixal choice falls on a suffix (-*dor* or -*ção*, in *apoiador* and *internação*, for example), while in EP the choice falls on -*nite* and -*mento* (*apoiente*, *internamento*). Similarly, *banheiro* in Brazil denotes WC, something that in PE we call “*casa/quarto de banho*”. Until the mid-1960s, in Portugal, a man who carried out surveillance activity on the beaches and, in addition, bathed the children (via diving) when requested, was called a *banheiro*. Today there are *nadadores-salvadores* [lifeguards], but they do not bathe children. In Portugal, *banheiro* also used to denote the WC, where baths were taken (sometimes publicly), but this is no longer the case. Brazil uses the locative-instrumental value of -*eiro* in this pair, while Portugal opts for the agentive value. Splintering is more widespread in Brazil than in Portugal, as can be seen from its enormous representativeness, even using onomastic bases, as evidenced by Gonçalves (2020), regarding lexical formations with segments of former president Bolsonaro’s name.

With regard to the morphosyntax of Vernacular Portuguese in Brazil, it is in marked divergence from contemporary European Portuguese. The book *Português brasileiro e português europeu: um diálogo de séculos* [Brazilian Portuguese and European Portuguese: a dialogue of centuries] (Rio-Torto, 2022a)⁶, recently published in Macau, which we organized in one of the doctoral courses in which I taught, summarizes some of the domains of morphosyntax in which EP and BP diverge the most, codifying the different anthropological, historical and cultural conditions of the two universes in contact since 1500. Having been the scene of so many miscegenationist and interlinguistic contacts, it was only natural that Brazil would adopt constructions and structures that were more devoid of the complexity inherent in an older and, in some respects, more conservative and more complex source variant.

MAILSON LOPES: Since your doctoral thesis (1993), and continuing in other publications and lectures, you have been one of the voices that has most constantly and eloquently defended the indispensability of taking into account the historical component of language for better understanding and explanation of word formation in the vernacular. Could you summarize your thoughts on this epistemological position?

GRAÇA RIO-TORTO: In everything in life, and language is a very visceral part of it, there is no present and future without a past. To disregard the genesis, diachronic

⁶ Available at: <https://cpclp.mpu.edu.mo/dialogo-de-seculos>. Access on: 2 Dec. 2023.

becoming, variation and change inherent to linguistic facts and processes would be epistemological folly. The historical factor permeates linguistic materials. This assumption takes away the legitimacy of dominantly synchronic studies, whatever the period or, at the limit, even studies based on an ahistorical reading of language that abstracts the temporal dimension from it. But Mailson will concede that considering past aspects of a given linguistic construct or process does not impoverish its understanding. It often sheds light on them, helps to explain some of their particularities, and may even be crucial in explaining their configuration and/or functioning. When reflecting on morphological and lexical facts, the influence of history is felt particularly strongly, but not everyone has the training and/or interest to explore it. Furthermore, hypotheses about past data are not always reliable or valid, but this is also true of the predictability we attribute to certain phenomena. Anyway, having graduated from the University of Coimbra, an institution founded in 1290, with undeniable reputation in the history of the Portuguese language and which has always played a key role in the formation of Brazilian intellectuals, having lived closely with Prof. Rosa Virgínia Mattos e Silva, and having studied Romance Philology, it would not be natural for me to be a staunch defender of the synchronicity that dominated the trends of the middle of the last century. Definitely, the perception of the historical flow as a variable of heuristic value is unavoidable for me, and it is all the more so when we observe its results in intralinguistic and interlinguistic analysis.

MAILSON LOPES: Although your interest was initially focused on the study of suffixation, in your recent book entitled *Prefixação na língua portuguesa contemporânea* (2019), you discuss, in more than 200 pages, this mechanism of affixal adjunction to the vocabulary left, which has always been less studied than suffixation. So, what led you to focus on prefixation recently and what aspects would you like to highlight regarding this morpholexical process in Portuguese?

GRAÇA RIO-TORTO: When I began my research into evaluative mechanisms in Portuguese, which culminated in my doctoral thesis, I tried to study not only the suffixal processes and patterns, but also the prefixal ones, as I always kept in mind that these also act in evaluation, whether quantitative or qualitative. Just like the suffixes *-inho*, *-aço* or *-eco*, the prefixes *super-*, *supra-*, *infra-*, *semi-* encode the evaluation of a property, entity or event (*semi-rígido*, *infra-humano*, *supra-ordenar*, *super-homem*). My interest in prefixes has therefore been present since the beginning of my research. This interest intensified as I progressed towards identifying the major semantic-derivational patterns or paradigms (which at the time I called Word Construction Rules) that support the functioning of the lexicon: the *nomina agentis*, the *nomina actionis*, the *essive* or abstract deadjectival nouns, the instrumental nouns, the locative nouns, the relational adjectives, the denominal and deadjectival verbs and their subclasses, etc. I then made a reflection, which continued after the publication of the book *Prefixação na língua*

portuguesa contemporânea [Prefixation in the contemporary Portuguese language], and which will be published shortly, which has to do with the thematic areas covered by prefixation and which coincide, or not, with those that suffixation encodes in Portuguese. I must say, moreover, that I am more fascinated by semantics than morphology in the strict sense, because it is semantics and syntax that, together with the other components of language, drive intercommunication. I am increasingly convinced that morphemes are at the service of semantic variables, and not the other way around. In fact, there are affixes and even genolexical processes that cut across several semantic domains. This perception, which cognitive studies have sought to explore, has existed in me for a long time, and it can also be seen in the neogrammarians, who have a very broad and very macro view of Romance languages. But I do not like to limit myself to an exclusively semantic-cognitive perspective of the lexicon: there are social, geolinguistic and cultural dimensions that are all too important, and which inflect/influence the grammars of the same source language, as in the case with Brazilian Portuguese and the European Portuguese used in Brazil before its independence. Some studies on the continuities and discontinuities between Portuguese from Brazil and from Portugal, all of which are available online,⁷ value the cultural dimensions that intertwine the Brazilian and Lusitanian national variants, whose identities are inseparable from their historical and cultural circumstances, in the broadest sense of these adjectives. Allow me to mention some studies that focus on the morphosyntax of Portuguese from Brazil and from Portugal, such as *Desafios do português 'popular' do Brasil no século XXI* [Challenges of 'popular' Brazilian Portuguese in the 21st century] (Rio-Torto, 2021) and *Português brasileiro e português europeu: um diálogo de séculos* [Brazilian Portuguese and European Portuguese: a centuries-long dialogue] (Rio-Torto, 2022a); on the lexicon of both varieties, Brazilian and Lusitanian, I mention *Caminhos de renovação lexical: fronteiras do possível* [Paths of lexical renewal: frontiers of the possible] (Rio-Torto, 2007), *Léxico, renovação, representações no Brasil e em Portugal* [Lexicon, renewal, representations in Brazil and Portugal] (Rio-Torto, 2015), *Regência preposicional no Português do Brasil e de Portugal: um olhar não normativo* [Prepositional rules in Brazilian and Portuguese: a non-normative look] (Rio-Torto, 2017), *Plasticidade textual/discursiva: mecanismos de reanálise* [Textual/discursive plasticity: mechanisms of reanalysis] (Rio-Torto, 2020a), *Renovação do Léxico no Português brasileiro e europeu. Da neologia técnico-científica à neologia expressiva, humorística, lúdica* [Lexicon renewal in Brazilian and European Portuguese. From technical-scientific neology to expressive, humorous and playful neology] (Rio-Torto, 2020b), *Rumos de mudança na gramática e no léxico* [Directions of change in grammar and lexicon] (Rio-Torto, 2022b), *Valores e usos do diminutivo -inho no português europeu e no português do Brasil* [Values and uses of the diminutive -inho in European and Brazilian Portuguese] (Rio-Torto, 2022c). I apologize for the list, which I leave, not out of vanity, but for

⁷ Available at: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1525-0737> e <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Graca-Rio-Torto>. Access on: 2 Dec. 2023.

observing that many of the studies that are carried out in Portugal on the Portuguese language, whether Brazilian or European, are unknown or ignored by many Brazilian researchers, which I find impoverishing, and this assumption is valid multidirectionally. I do not accept that my students are unaware of what is produced in Brazil regarding the aspect of the Portuguese language that they are analyzing. The same applies to any other language or language variety. But this is a tendency that is felt not only in the social sciences and humanities, perhaps due to the excess of materials we are confronted with today. However, there is a middle ground between the opposite poles, which I think should be cultivated.

MAILSON LOPES: Over the last five years, you have also dedicated yourself to Lusitanian anthroponymy, in comparison with Brazilian anthroponymy. How do you see the development of anthroponymic studies on both sides of the Atlantic and to what extent can they be structured and carried out in a zone of intersection with morphological studies?

GRAÇA RIO-TORTO: Studies on onomastics have gained a renewed focus in recent decades, which I am very pleased about. As a result of derivational studies, I had become interested in toponymy, but I had never written anything on the subject. Thanks to the challenge of Prof. Juliana Soledade, from UFBA/UnB, who at the right time launched a project on names in use in Brazil,⁸ it was possible to set up a small team in Coimbra that is working on aspects of the reception of Brazilian names in Portugal and the transfer of Portuguese names to Brazil. I began by analyzing the *Estatuto de <y> nos antroponímicos brasileiros* [Status of <y> in Brazilian anthroponyms] (Rio-Torto, 2022d), because I was trying to find out whether it was a morpheme, introduced by external influence, or a graphic variant, a hypothesis that seems more consistent. A study was published in July 2023 on the *Renovação da antroponímia em Portugal. O que os dados dos séculos XX e XXI mostram* [Renewal of anthroponymy in Portugal. What the data from the 20th and 21st centuries show]. It demonstrates the enormous graphic variation introduced in the contemporary Portuguese onomastics, and the respective ongoing anthroponymic renewal underway due to the recent wave of Brazilian immigration in Lusitanian territory. Studies are underway on the names of Portuguese emigrants to Brazil in the first half of the 20th century.

MAILSON LOPES: For more than 40 years you have been studying Portuguese lexical morphology. Looking back in your mind, what differences do you observe between the studies that were carried out in the 1980s, the following decades and in the current decade? In other words, is there an evolution or a transformation in all the studies, research and interests in this area over the last four decades?

⁸ Available at: <https://dicionariodenomesdobrasil.com.br>. Access on: 2 Dec. 2023.

GRAÇA RIO-TORTO: In the 1980s, theoretical concerns fell into a few dominant, albeit not exclusive, strands: in the wake of a strong countercurrent to preceding structuralism, a there was a fairly widespread generativism, attentive to the processes and syntax of languages, with which sociolinguistics, anthropolinguistics, a renewed functionalism, text and discourse linguistics, pragmatics, and, at the same time, mentalist and cognitivist tendencies germinated, which flourished in the current construction and relational grammars. With a partially innovative conceptual and formal apparatus, Construction and Relational Grammar is heir to much that has been innovated in recent decades. The contribution of computer science in data storage and processing, corpus linguistics, the valuable contributions of psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics allow an inter and transdisciplinary knowledge that was unthinkable forty years ago. I remember that until the early 1990s, communication was done by letters, access to texts — especially those not on the market — from libraries was exclusively in person, so all the trips I made in Europe, Brazil and Asia were of crucial importance for collecting bibliographic materials. And I am deeply grateful to all colleagues for sending materials by post, in photocopies or in the original, which enabled me to get in touch with the new things that we exchanged, to the extent of the networks of relationships that we were able to establish. As our knowledge evolved, our perspectives, objectives and concerns naturally broadened. However, many of the essential questions about some linguistic facts remain to be clarified, and it's a good thing that this is the case, so that curiosity and research can continue.

MAILSON LOPES: Once again, our sincere thanks for your willingness to participate in this interview. Not wishing to abuse your availability, but counting on your manifest generosity, we would like to ask you, in this last point, to make some final considerations and, if possible, to indicate to the readers of this text, suggestions for methodological routes, epistemological positions and practical guidelines for better knowing and better studying and investigating the lexicon and morphology of the Portuguese language.

GRAÇA RIO-TORTO: My first suggestion to younger people interested in researching the lexicon and morphology of the Portuguese language is to read the reference materials closest to us in time, such as those by Ataliba de Castilho, Maria Helena de Moura Neves, Rosa Virgínia Mattos e Silva, Margarida Basilio, Carlos Alexandre Gonçalves, Mark Aronoff, Geert Booij, Ray Jackendoff, Jenny Audring, Antonio Fábregas, Soledad Varela, to mention a few of the most renowned, but also to go back to the neogrammarians, such as Diez or Meyer-Lübke, or to the more traditional grammarians and philologists, such as Said Ali, José Joaquim Nunes, Carolina Michaelis de Vasconcelos, in order to draw knowledge from different diachronic phases that, if well interrelated, end up complementing each other. Another suggestion, this one of an empirical-methodological nature, has to do with the primacy of materials rather than

theoretical frameworks. We have to be humble enough to let the data speak for itself, even if it contradicts hypotheses that we consider more plausible or knowledge we have taken for granted. Nothing is immutable, as we can see when we look at language as an inherited and moving system.

This concept connects with another, in which synchronic functioning and historical flux permeate and interconnect. Much progress has been made in understanding the biological foundations of language, but much remains to be investigated in extremely important areas such as the neurobiology of language, cognition and language, language acquisition, language evolution and change. It will be in our best interest for the descriptions of each language to be as advanced as possible to serve biolinguistics, neurolinguistics, cognitive sociolinguistics, among other areas of vital interest for natural language communication of (and between) human beings. Finally, with regard to the Portuguese language in its various transoceanic national varieties, it would be very useful to advance in the knowledge of all its manifestations in Africa, America and Europe, to describe the convergences and divergences that interconnect them, with respect to all sectors of the language, be they specialized lexicons or less represented dialects, be they the most or least prestigious sociolects, be they the most complex or the most defective constructions, be they the most or the least orthodox. All have linguistic legitimacy and all have their *raison d'être*, which no canon can circumvent. Knowing how to differentiate and being able to make informed choices is one way forward. To do this, it is necessary to have educational agents with good technical and professional training and, upstream, quality research that feeds new practices and knowledge. Knowledge has a unique value, and I am not thinking about economic value. Let's cultivate it.

In conclusion, allow me to express my heartfelt thanks to all the students and colleagues, from all latitudes, with whom I have had the privilege of interacting, for the teachings and incentives they have given me. Having (counted on) such high-quality human capital is a unique asset, which I keep in my heart. And to the University of Coimbra, for the constant support over such a long journey.

Acknowledgements

To Dr. Graça Rio-Torto — admired linguist, wise teacher and very dear friend — for her prompt availability and extended generosity in giving this interview, on the occasion of her retirement as full professor of Linguistics at the Faculdade de Letras of the University of Coimbra.

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Received on February 28, 2023

Approved on September 30, 2023