

PRESENTATION

Alfa begins 2017 with a very rich issue due to the range of topics covered by its articles, representing the diversity of interests and approaches that prevail in our area. Society, media, ideology, interaction, cognition, perception, verbal production, lexicography, phonology, history, writing system, themes and dimensions permeated by language and languages, are present in the following pages.

The first two articles investigate aspects of the construction of meaning based on the conception of language as a socio-historically situated activity. The text of Guimarães and Moita Lopes deals with the trajectory of a viral text, discussing its transformations and its redeterminations as part of complex processes of identity expression conveyed in face-to-face interactions and via social media. Costa, on the other hand, thinks the relation between the proposals of the Circle of Bakhtin and the Marxist thought, taking into account the role of ideology in the Bakhtinian vision of language. To discuss and illustrate the concept of ideological sign, the author analyzes the word ‘selfie’ as an “index of contemporary transformations”, demonstrating how “changes in the forms of production” correlate to changes in interactional processes and patterns of behavior. The two works are close in their dialogue, less or more direct, with the creation and circulation of language in the digital media.

In the third article, Cruz discusses the role of the articulation of verbal and gestural resources in the construction of the interactional space. Thus, the role of multimodality in the production of meaning is highlighted. The study is based on the analysis of recorded audio-visual excerpts with people with Alzheimer’s disease; the regard upon a context of interaction modified by pathology ends up allowing a rethinking of categories and processes related to language.

The next four articles represent a dive into different aspects of the Portuguese language. Berti proposes to investigate the development of perceptual-auditory acquisition of phonic contrasts in Brazilian Portuguese. The study is based on an experiment with children between 4 and 5 years old, which led to a characterization of the process’s gradualness as depending on the nature of the sounds (vowel or not, presence or absence of certain traits). Vilarinho’s work proposes the development of a “Portuguese Informatized Analogical Dictionary”, discussing its theoretical basis (the concept of analogy, Theory of Prototypes and Frames Semantics) and presenting the methodological model conceived for its implementation.

Veloso discusses the wordiness restrictions of Portuguese: what is the minimum condition (MC), from the point of view of the quantity of phonological material, to

assert that a phonetic chain is a word of the language? To answer this question, the author empirically evaluates the process of oralization of abbreviations in contemporary European Portuguese, achieving consistent and original results. In turn, Fonte brings new light on the history of unstressed vocalism in the Portuguese language. Taking on the challenges of the study of phonetical-phonological phenomena in the historical dimension, the author investigated the characterization of unstressed mid vowels raising in Portuguese during the 13th, 15th and 16th centuries. The study provides a detailed mapping of the process in the period, contrasting with current Brazilian and European varieties.

This issue concludes with another trip to the past, back to the 16th to 19th centuries, to glimpse at the history of the linguistic ideas that circulated in Europe of that period concerning, particularly, the Chinese writing system. Barreto revisits the debate that occupied the European scene, concluding that the conceptions of writing developed in the West owe to the (still inconclusive) discussions about Chinese writing.

Due to the diversity of themes and approaches, due to the originality of the studies, we are certain that the edition presented here will be a quite useful and an enjoyable reading for all.

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