

REVIEW

Reflections about Phonology: achievements and challenges

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ABSTRACT

The videoconference presented by Thaís Cristófaró Silva, during the Abralín live event, focuses on helping students and interested parties who wish to enter the field of phonology, or those who feel confused among the diversity of studies that a priori do not seem clear. The author deconstructs the religious view of the IPA, judging it only as a form of representation, and points out different problems as a consequence. It also presents emerging research in the area of phonetics and phonology that has been little explored, analyzing phenomena such as the nasalization of vowels (and consonants), at the end of syllables; palatization of alveolar occlusives and the "erasing" of unstressed [i]. And it also debates about the current achievements and challenges of phonology.

RESUMO

A conferência apresentada por Thaís Cristófaró Silva durante o evento Abralín Ao Vivo, foca em colaborar com alunos e interessados que desejam ingressar na área da fonologia, ou àqueles sem elementos decisivos em meio a diversidade de estudos que a priori não parecem claros. A autora desconstrói a visão ortodoxa sobre o IPA, julgando-o apenas como uma forma de representação e aponta diferentes problemas em consequência disso. Apresenta também pesquisas emergentes na área da fonética e fonologia que foram pouco exploradas, analisando fenômenos como a nasalização de vogais (e de consoantes) em finais de sílabas, palatização de

oclusivas alveolares e o “apagamento” do [i] átono. E ainda, debate sobre as atuais conquistas e desafios da fonologia.

KEYWORDS

Phonetics and phonology. Emerging phenomena. Achievements and challenges.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Fonética e fonologia. Fenômenos emergentes. Conquistas e desafios.

Thais Cristófaros Silva's speech is focused on students and interested parties who wish to enter the phonology area, or those who feel confused amid the diversity of studies that, a priori, do not seem clear. Her speech is also based on the need to create new alternatives, as no theory remains the same; there will always be progress.

To start the discussion, the author presents the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), which allows us to describe any sound, as long as we know the principles that regulate it. Thus, her speech was actually very useful in the descriptive character, strictly when working with the production of speech sounds through the use of symbols. However, she presents a counterpoint, which makes a lot of sense, by placing the IPA as a simple type of writing. While recognizing its exemplary character, she compares it to other types of writing (eg.: Phoenician, classical Greek, current Greek, Egyptian hieroglyph, Aztec writing, among others), judging them to be at the same level, simply a type of representation.

Some of the IPA symbols were inspired by the alphabetic symbols on writing (eg.: p (in spelling) → /p/ (in phonology) → [p] (in phonetics); t (in spelling) → /t/ (in phonology) → [t, tʃ] in phonetics) and others may not be so similar (eg.: lh (in spelling) → /ʎ/ (in phonology) → [ʎ, lʰ, y] (in phonetics). With that being said, Cristófaros Silva suggests the confusing character of symbolic representation.

Supported by the research Phones and phonemes are conceptual blends, not cognitive letters, by Robert Port (2011), the author reaffirms that IPA is a symbolic representational system, and that, in some way, it is not translucent. “It, in some way, surfs to different sides” (CRISTÓFAROS SILVA, 2020), making her believe that this may be one of the reasons why many students are not interested in phonology studies, because of the confusion of the representation itself. Another example of conflict, regarding the “standard” representation of the IPA symbols, according to Cristófaros Silva, refers to the forms of representation of glides and tap or flap, from English. She criticizes the lack of reason for certain choices when it comes to applying them, as well as the possibility of using other symbols that are not part of the IPA standard. To help students and curious people in the area, not only at this specific moment, but throughout her speech, the author is concerned with referencing research and indicating supporting books. She also comments about the free software PRAAT, developed by

Paul Boersma and David Weenink, which revolutionized the studies in phonetics. It was enriching to take further steps beyond the articulatory description.

Subsequently, the author talks about her research using textbooks, which investigates how phonetic and phonological representation of words is made, that is, if they were being used properly - given the need to use /crossbars/ for phonological representations and [brackets] for phonetics. It was observed that, generally, the data are presented without square brackets or crossbars (eg.: a 'sĩ, a 'siN, 'assim'); sometimes only by crossbars, without indicating whether it is phonetic or phonological (eg.: a 'sĩ, /a 'siN/, 'assim); crossbars for phonetics (eg.: /a 'sĩ/). Occurrences were also found in which the orthographic forms are listed and the corresponding symbols are phonologically indicated according to the sound explained in the book unit (eg.: *pintar*, *símbolo*, *sim*: /iN/ ou [ĩ]). And, finally, a combination of spelling and phonetic representation (eg.: [in]acabado, [ĩ]feliz, [i]mortal). So, if symbols are so important, why aren't they used in textbooks? The author tries to justify this questioning, pointing to the existence of a semiosis between phonetics and phonology, and reflects that we have to, at least, reflect on this problem. In fact, there is a phonological multirepresentationality that leads to discuss the non-relevance of a single representation of phonology.

There is a consensus on phonological problems, which most researchers are interested in. On the other hand, there are phenomena that are temporally at different times, which can lead to new questions. One of them is the phenomenon of nasalization of vowels - evolved from a nasal consonant that "disappeared" with the time of Brazilian speaking - which contrasts with the corresponding oral vowel (eg.: [a] and [ã]). However, there is evidence that the nasalization of the consonant is re-manifesting in some Brazilian Portuguese (BP) dialects. This phenomenon can be observed in "Vamos" as [vãM], or in "Dona Maria" as [donmariã], or even in "cano torto" as [kãntohtõ] (CRISTÓFARO SILVA, 2020).

Another phenomenon that deserves attention is the palatization of alveolar occlusives. In 1970, Câmara Junior reports the aspiration of /t/ in stressed syllables followed by [i] (eg.: *tia* [t'ia] → [tʃia], *tinta* [t'ĩta] → [tʃĩta], *dia* [diã] → [dʒiã], *ardia* [ah'diã] → [ah'dʒiã]). However, other studies that investigate palatization, identify other possibilities for this phenomenon: when alveolar occlusives occur in a post-tonic position and there is a glide. As, for example, in "pátio", where there are occurrences of the production of [patʃjõ] or [patʃõ], as a result of an assimilation of the glide with the /t/. The same can occur in "índio" [indʒjõ] or [indʒõ]; pronouncing the words "festa" [fɛstã] and "desde" [dezdi] as [fɛʃta] and [deʒdi] are also examples of palatization by assimilation with alveolar consonant (CRISTÓFARO SILVA; OLIVEIRA-GUIMARAES; NASCIMENTO, 2012; BARBOZA, 2013; BATISTA FILHO, 2018). This shows us that palatization can have different paths than the occurrences in tonic positions. It is further questioned whether affrications can occur before vowels other than [i]. As the author shows, the answer is yes: in words "adjetivo" and "adjunto", resulting from the epenthesis between [d] and [ʒ] performed as [a'dʒɛtʃivõ] and [a'dʒũtõ]; in borrowing words like "tchau, cappuccino and jeans", for example, we have [tʃaw], [kapu'tʃinõ] and [dʒĩs] as the possibility of pronunciation; in words created like "tchã and lindja" pronounced like [tʃã] and [lĩdʒa]; and in "questionário" and "teatro", returning the example of glide previously treated, having [kɛʃõ'náriõ] and [tʃãtrõ] as pronunciation possibilities. We conclude that [tʃ] and [dʒ] may have been inserted in

Brazilian Portuguese through palatization. The author says that this phenomenon is spreading in the language, but there are not many studies on these new cases. She adds that this action is part of the language, in an attempt to harmonize the system so that it is efficient.

A third phenomenon addressed was the “erasing” of the unstressed [i]. The first mention of the phenomenon was through Miriam Lemle in (1966 *apud* CRISTÓFARO SILVA, 2020), but for a long time, due attention was not given. Currently, there are several studies focusing on these occurrences. For Cristófaró Silva, this erasure can happen in a very wide way: between two wheezers as in “meses” [ˈmezis] → [ˈmezs] (CRISTÓFARO SILVA; ALMEIDA; GUEDRI, 2008); evidence in favor of the sequence [kis] as in “leques” and “destaques” demonstrate that the realization without the vowel [i] is allowed. Instead of [ˈlɛkis] or [desˈtakis] one says [ˈlɛks] or [desˈtaks] (CANTONI, 2009); the [i] can also disappear after wheezing (ex: *passe* [ˈpasɨ] → [ˈpas] (MENESES; ALBANO, 2015); in plural forms, as in “potes” [ˈpɔtɨs] → [ˈpɔts] (CRISTÓFARO SILVA; LEITE, 2015) or words such as “chaves” [ˈʃavis] → [ˈʃavs] (SOARES, 2016 *apud* CRISTÓFARO SILVA, 2020); consonant meetings through erasing the [i], possible in “júpiter” [ˈʒupitɛh] → [ˈʒuptɛh] (NASCIMENTO, 2016), in words beginning with [i] followed by [s] (ex.: *estado* [ɪstadu] → [stadu] (GOMES, 2009).

Finally, she ends her speech by summarizing the achievements that gave the lecture its title, which were gradually addressed during his speech. Cristófaró Silva, states that the theoretical and methodological advances in phonetics and phonology are currently wide. New tools such as the use of video, ultrasound, EMA (magnetic articulation), electropalatography, electroglotography, magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and electroencephalography (EGG) build a new reality. Therefore, much is known about BP. For this reason, it was influential in the recognition of Libras (Brazilian sign language) as an official language, in the acceptance of native languages as local languages of use, and of heritage languages. Investments in the area have enabled professional qualification and the emergence of laboratories and research groups, and as a consequence the growth of graduate studies and events in the area. Currently, transdisciplinarity between fields of study is common, generating a type of shared knowledge. And finally, the dialogue between peers, the acceptance of diversity and cordiality as a result of all these advances.

However, although there are great achievements, phonology still faces challenges, according to Cristófaró Silva (2020); the formalization of proposals for multi and transdisciplinary integration as part of the cognitive sciences is one of them. She sees the need for dialogue between different fields of study and idealizes an institution that brings them together in order to allow reflections on the cognitive sciences. Other punctuated challenges were: slow theoretical advances, the need for further exploration of BP, acceptance of plurilingualism (minority languages) and the socialization of knowledge.

Phonologists carry a social responsibility. Therefore, they need to build solid arguments and defend ideas. And one can do this by filling in gaps, daring and creating new questionings. (CRISTÓFARO SILVA, 2020).

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