

REVIEW

# Going beyond the phonological: a bold, political and hopeful live

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ABSTRACT

This is a review of the conference *Fonologia: conquistas e desafios*, aired live at Abralin (Brazilian Linguistic Association) and delivered by Thais Cristófaró Silva, whose discourse has been highlighted by a critical placement regarding the current political situation in Brazil and by the scientific community role on the development of mechanisms aimed at combating social inequality. She emphasized the interaction between Phonetics and Phonology by bringing out three main advances on Phonetics: the IPA, the empirical advances on different technologies and the cognitive motricity hypothesis. Concerning Phonology, Cristófaró Silva (2020) pointed out the Brazilian Portuguese phonological phenomena, as follows: vowel nasalization, palatalization of alveolar stops and erasure of the unstressed [i]. Lastly, she recognized the challenges to be faced by areas in question, such as the integralization of several cognitive sciences, the elaboration of new terminologies, the valorization of plurilingualism and the socialization of knowledge.

RESUMO

Esta é uma resenha da conferência *Fonologia: conquistas e desafios*, proferida, no Abralin ao Vivo – *Linguistics on-line*, por Thais Cristófaró Silva, cuja fala foi marcada por seu posicionamento crítico acerca da atual conjuntura política do Brasil e do papel da comunidade científica no desenvolvimento de mecanismos voltados ao combate às desigualdades sociais. Ela destacou a interação entre a Fonética e a Fonologia e chamou a atenção

para os três principais avanços da Fonética: o IPA, os avanços experimentais com diferentes tecnologias e a hipótese da motricidade cognitiva. Quanto à Fonologia, Cristófaros Silva (2020) abordou os seguintes fenômenos fonológicos do Português Brasileiro: a nasalização de vogais, a palatalização das oclusivas alveolares e o apagamento do [i] átono. Por fim, reconheceu os desafios a serem enfrentados pelas áreas em pauta, como integrar as diversas ciências cognitivas, elaborar novas terminologias, ampliar o conhecimento sobre o Português Brasileiro, valorizar o plurilinguismo e socializar o conhecimento.

### KEYWORDS

Phonetics. Phonology. Scientific advances.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Fonética. Fonologia. Avanços Científicos.

Firstly, Thais Cristófaros Silva (UFMG/CNPq/FAPEMIG) began her speech by presenting her critical placement regarding the current political situation in Brazil and the scientific community role on the development of mechanisms aimed at fighting social inequality. Secondly, she warned her speech would be aimed at the students and her goal was not supposed to unveil truths, but ideas.

When approaching what has been sedimented on both Phonetics and Phonology fields, the phonologist advocated in favor of new ways of analyses. Decades after the release of the known book *Phonetics and Phonology of Portuguese: study script and exercise guideline*, broadcasted by Contexto publishing company, Cristófaros Silva (2020) acknowledged such theories and formal resources were valid, notwithstanding, she defended the need of going beyond, as she did, in the beginning of 2000's, influenced by researchers in this field, when epistemologically broke her tracing, hitherto strictly linked to formal phonological models, and started to be guided by an experimental vision, the Phonology of Use and the multi-representationality hypothesis.

Five premises were presented by Cristófaros Silva as a basis for her speech. The first one is that science is a heritage of society, that is, researchers actively contribute to the construction of a socially shared scientific heritage. The second one combines science with social inequality, and according to her, therefore, science should focus on decreasing the social inequality effects. The third premise is that, in the scientific field, many proposals coexist, and they should be underlined by the ability of listening and exercising tolerance. The fourth one conceives the knowledge as a gradual and dynamic process. Finally, by introducing the fifth one, she reminds the permanent science mutability as a motivation for her discourse, which is directed to what has changed in the phonetical and phonological researches

Henceforth, the scholar recalled that the Linguistics split into specific areas has only a methodological character, for in her words, grammar operates as a whole, not as isolated levels. Afterwards, she emphasized the advances on Phonetics, and by doing so, she quoted representative bibliographic productions in this process and pointed topics as – hearing, speech perception, experimental design, etc. – whose referred area was encompassed. Meanwhile, she brought out the need for a dialogue between phonetics and other fields of knowledge.

When introducing her considerations on Phonology, the linguist reflected on the role of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) in order to highlight its relevance for studies in the cited areas, considering, however, its symbolic nature, its basis on the alphabetic system and the fact it does not handle the complexity of the entire representation of natural languages. With the intention of evidencing the problems of this system, the lecturer resorted to differences on the Brazilian Portuguese (BP) glide along with the *tap* or *flap* occurrences in English [ɾ, ɾ̥], mostly represented by a symbol not found in the IPA. Another problem, according to her, is an inadequate use of square brackets and cross bars to tell apart which is respectively phonetic or phonological. To illustrate some of the consequences on this matter, Cristófaró Silva briefly introduced the results of a research she carried out on eight textbooks whose data shown the presence, in their content, of several misspellings on both phonetical and phonological representations. Such misunderstanding on those symbols, according to the researcher, is motivated by the thin line between Phonetics and Phonology. In the meantime, she recollected the fact that grammar is complex, dynamic, systematic and, by consequence, abstract – that's the reason why phonological abstractions occur. Nevertheless, in addition to such characteristics, there is also a variability, which precludes the reach of a representational uniqueness.

Posteriorly, Cristófaró Silva mentioned three phonological processes on BP which, in accordance with her, have been noticeable over different times: vowel nasalization, the palatalization of alveolar stops and the erasure of the unstressed [i]. When explaining the first process, she reinforced the phonemical contrast thesis and presented information in the BP concerning emerging data, such as nasal consonants at the end of the syllable in words like *vamos* / [vʌm] and *dona maria* / [donmariə], both belonging to the state of Minas Gerais dialectal variation. The second process, palatization, is still in progress, and in Cristófaró Silva's point of view, gradiently takes place in different contexts and present emerging data, where affrications may occur followed by vowels other than [i] in *adjunto* / [a'dʒũtu] and *teatro* / [ˈtʃatru]. The last phonological process is the erasure of unstressed [i], as in: [ˈmezs], [ˈlɛks], [sˈtadu]. Cristófaró Silva pointed out that this phenomenon presents gradual implementation and it is relevant because it directly interferes with accent patterns and the creation of innovative syllabic patterns, such as *participação* / [pahʃisipaˈsãu] ~ [pahtspaˈsãu].

The scholar emphasized, then, phonology's main achievements, which are: the existence of an enriched formal apparatus on the explanation and description of phonological components, broad and diverse papers regarding the evolution of phonological phenomena and the formulation of the multi-representationality hypothesis. After that, the phonologist affirmed that even though, to formal models, the phonological representations (FR) exclude redundant information, researches dealing with a fine phonemical contrast show that the phonetic detail on representations should not be put away.

Moreover, she championed that the FR might be altered, by emphasizing that sound changes, whether ongoing or consolidated ones, have a permanent impact on abstract representations.

When approaching the variability role on the phonological organization, the researcher stated the phonological context is not the one to be taken into account. It is necessary to consider another relevant information regarding our phonological and linguistic knowledge, e.g., our ability to recognize words and different voices. At last, she was favorable to multi-representational models and pointed out that the representational place, under the exemplar theory perspective, is words along with constructions that make up our grammatical organization.

Ultimately, the linguist said the greatest challenge is to formalize an integrative proposal, multi and trans-disciplinary one, as a component for the Cognitive Sciences. She also stated that though the scientific advances are slow, the elaboration of new terminologies are necessary. Then, she highlighted we still have a long way ahead to get knowledge on BP as well as minority languages one and, on top of that, she reinforced the need to socialize all this knowledge, in view of the fact that science has a big responsibility on the social intellectuality promotion.

### REFERENCES

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