

REVIEW

Neology in the Brazilian Portuguese: results of systematic researches and tendencies to the future of the area



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DATES

Received: 25/07/2020
Accepted: 28/08/2020
Published: 09/09/2020

HOW TO CITE

Serra, L. H.; Ribeiro, P. T.; Mota,
A. V. (2020). Neology in the
Brazilian Portuguese: results of
systematic researches and
tendencies to the future of the
area. *Revista da Abralín*, v. 19,
n. 2, p. 1-5, 2020.

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ABSTRACT

This text is a critical review of the conference presented by Professor Ieda Maria Alves at *Abralín live event: Linguists Online*. The conference took place on July 19, 2020, and was titled *What do studies about neology of Brazilian Portuguese (BP) teach us?*. In the exposition, the researcher proposed a reflection on what can be established through systematic observation of the neologisms of BP and, for that, divided her presentation into three parts, namely: concept of neology and neologism, neology and cultural aspects, and neology and lexicography. Throughout the presentation, the professor demonstrated that the research into neology contributes to the studies of the PB lexicon, as well as to the studies of morphology, syntax, semantics, among many other observable aspects that can be analyzed in a language in addition to enabling the understanding of social, historical and cultural aspects of Brazil.

RESUMO

Este texto é uma revisão crítica da conferência apresentada pela

professora Ieda Maria Alves no evento *Abralin ao Vivo – Linguists Online*. A conferência ocorreu em 19 de julho de 2020 e foi intitulada *O que os estudos sobre a neologia do português do Brasil (PB) nos ensinam?*. Na exposição, a pesquisadora propôs uma reflexão sobre o que pode ser estabelecido por meio da observação sistemática dos neologismos do PB e, para isso, dividiu sua apresentação em três partes, a saber: conceito de neologia e neologismo, neologia e aspectos culturais, e neologia e lexicografia. Ao longo da apresentação, a professora demonstrou que a pesquisa em neologia contribui para os estudos do léxico do português, bem como para os estudos de morfologia, sintaxe, semântica, entre muitos outros aspectos observáveis que podem ser analisados em uma língua, além de possibilitar a compreensão dos aspectos sociais, históricos e culturais do Brasil.

KEYWORDS

Neology. Neologism. Brazilian Portuguese.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Neologia. Neologismo. Português Brasileiro.

This critical review is a summary and an analysis of the conference delivered by Professor Ieda Maria Alves in a live event promoted by the Brazilian Linguistic Association (ABRALIN) and other international linguistic associations. The presentation titled *What do studies about neology of Brazilian Portuguese teach us?* took place on July 19th at *Abralin ao Vivo – Linguists Online* on YouTube.

Ieda Maria Alves is a professor of the Faculty of Philosophy, Language and Literature, and Human Sciences (FFLCH) at the University of São Paulo (USP). She is a Brazilian lexicon researcher of expressive relevance, and she runs a neologisms' observatory of the contemporary Brazilian Portuguese (TermNeo) at USP. In her conference, she brought some results of years researching neologism and exposed her thoughts about this topic in the Brazilian Portuguese (BP). She also demonstrated how this phenomenon is important to characterize the BP since, through the neologisms' systematic observation, some patterns, and tendencies to the neologic formation in BP can be comprehended. According to the professor, those neologisms illustrate how social events influence the language and its transformation. Ieda Maria Alves organized her presentation into three moments: (1) the concept of neology and neologism; (2) neology and cultural aspects; and (3) neology and lexicography.

In the first moment, *neology* and *neologism* were defined. According to Alves (2007, p.5, own translation), "the process of lexical creation is named as neology. The element that results of it, the new word, is denominated neologism". The professor also exposed that the word *neologism* occurred for the first time in Portuguese in the eighteenth century, while the name of the process, *neology*,

occurred for the first time in Portuguese in 1868. The researcher reminded that a neologism can correspond to a new lexical formation in the lexicon of a language as well as to a new meaning acquired by a word that already exists. According to Alves (2007), the neologism can happen when the society has the need to name a new social phenomenon which can be linked to the technological, cultural and political areas among others.

Based on Sablayrolles (2017), Alves explained there is a difficulty in defining what a neologism is due to the novelty concept of a word, as it may be a neologism to one and not a neologism to another. To solve this problem, the speaker followed some criteria proposed by Cabré (1993) to identify terminological neologisms which are also applicable to general language units, they are: diachrony, lexicography, systematic instability, and psychology. Considering these factors, a lexical unit is considered neologic if it has appeared in society in a recent moment (diachrony); if it is not recorded in the general dictionaries (lexicography); if it presents morphological, semantic or syntax instability in its recordings, therefore, the new word or meaning does not have established features yet (systematic instability); and if it is perceived by the speakers as unprecedented (psychological).

Besides these criteria, Alves also considered the pragmatic aspects of communication to categorize a word as a neologism. Based on a Guerrero Ramos (2017) discussion, Alves talked about the neologism of the sender and of the receiver, that is, when the meaning of a word is perceived as neologic by the receiver, but not by the sender.

Another important criterion considered by the researcher is the idea that a neologism does not exist by itself, but always in relation to a group of uses arbitrarily defined (REY, 1976). However, she reminded that in the arbitrariness, we must be the most coherent as possible. To do this, Alves based herself on the concept of the exclusion corpus proposed by Boulanger (1979) which can be defined as a set of real texts of a language. These texts might be printed, scanned or oral, and should have a significant number of words. In this sense, another criterion adopted is check if the word in analysis can be seen in this exclusion corpus. If the word could not be found in any of those texts, it will be considered neologic.

To finish the first part of her talk, professor Alves showed her project, the neologisms' observatory of the contemporary Brazilian Portuguese (TermNeo) which was created in 1993. The corpus of this observatory is journalistic, which means it is composed of newspapers, magazines, blogs and internet pages. The speaker reported that her group has already found 70 thousand of neologisms throughout the years in a corpus composed by recent texts in BP from different areas, such as literature, agriculture, politics and economy. In the corpus, Alves and her research group found many recurrent processes in the new word formations in BP such as prefixation, suffixation, compound, foreignism, blending, and others. Based on systematic researches, the professor said the prefixation is the morphological process that contributed the most to new formations in BP, being the prefixes and the suffixes that are negative or indicate some intensity the ones more productive in the TermNeo corpus.

In the second part of the presentation, Alves resumed what had been said about the relationship between the linguistic and cultural aspects. According to her, a corpus analyzed from the neology

perspective can foster studies of the contemporary society through lexicon. For her, the changes in a language such as new formations or new meanings attributed to a word that already exists are motivated by sociocultural events. To illustrate that, the researcher brought the prefix *ciclo-* that had its uses increased in new lexical formations due to the cultural encouragement to use bicycles as a mean of transportation. This social event promoted the creation of neologisms in BP such as *cicloativismo*, *cicloviajante*, *ciclofaixa* and *ciclorrota*.

Another group of new words is formed by foreignisms, that is, words from other languages - mostly from English - that are imported to BP. As examples, Alves brought the words *delivery* and *watai*. However, she reinforced that when a word is imported so it is its concept, meaning that this new word also carries within cultural aspects.

Alves demonstrated how the resources used to express intensity in BP has changed throughout the years. She exemplified it telling that the suffixes *-íssimo* and *-érrimo* were widely used, but they have been replaced to prefixes such as *hiper*, *super* and *mega* due to the changes at the end of the 70s and the 80s driven by the technology uses. To illustrate, she presented formations such as *hipercantor*, *super compositor*, *megaestrela*, and *super-ultra-megaexagerado*. She reinforced the speaker has the knowledge related to the level of intensity of each prefix such as in the internet community name *estou sendo super hiper mega feliz*.

The professor also presented that the intensive aspect of those prefixes can be reinforced by the uses of suffixes like in *microcachorrinho* and *superjipões*. Alves continued her talk illustrating how the affixes which express multifunctionality, sharing and distancing reflect the recent changes in the social organization. As examples, there are the productivity of the prefix *multi* as in *multimercado* and *multinacional*, the uses of *co-* in *co-sofrimento* and *co-terapeuta*, and the uses of *tele-* in *teletrabalho* and *telemedicina*.

In the last part of her talk, Alves discussed the neologisms in the general dictionary, analyzing their inclusions in the two biggest dictionaries in Brazil - *o Grande Dicionário Houaiss da Língua Portuguesa* (online version), and *o Dicionário Contemporâneo da Língua Portuguesa - Caldas Aulete*. In a work collaboration with the Professor Bruno Maronezzi, the speaker observed how these dictionaries recorded the lexical innovations in BP, and they noticed that they are updated according to certain language trends. The two researchers investigated affixes and words that can form other units in BP such as *anti-* in *anti-roubo*, and *fantasma* in *empresa-fantasma*. They also observed that the neologism *chutômetro* is already in the *Dictionary Caldas Aulete*, however, the dictionary does not present any grammatical or morphological information of this lexical unity.

To finish, Alves exposed her personal consideration on the word-formation in BP, affirming that new words are rarely created since the speakers tend to join elements that already exist in a language to form another lexical unit. For her, the words in BP are recycled and created in order to make the language updated and functional, fulfilling, therefore, communicative demands.

The presentation delivered by Professor Ieda Maria Alves brought a summarized vision of her studies and research on lexical science, in addition to what are the tendencies followed in BP concerning the creation of words. She exposed different perspectives of neologisms studies and showed

how these studies collaborate to know the Portuguese language in Brazil. The examples used by the professor as well as the novelty and the systematicity of her corpus showed the importance of Alves studies. Her work goes beyond the study of words since it also permeates culture and politics. The explanations given by the researcher are a great opportunity to understand deeply the importance of the lexicon to better comprehend a culture and the way people conceive the world.

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