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Presentation

# Introduction v26, n2

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This special issue, titled *Romance Languages and Methodological Practices: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, addresses the study of Romance varieties from an empirical perspective. It presents original contributions based on specific corpora, while the methodological discussions on working with these data are not limited to particular cases; rather, they have broader (and, we believe, valuable) implications for linguistic studies. These implications are especially relevant in the current scientific context, where the selection and comparison of corpora, work with big data, and the open sharing of corresponding resources —such as in the digital world following the FAIR principles (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reuse: <https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/>)— occupy a significant part of reflection and praxis in contemporary linguistics.

The ultimate origin of this special issue —the context that first brought its three editors together in joint work— lies in the organization of an international summer school funded by the Erasmus program of the European Union through its *Blended Intensive Program* (BIP), held at the University of Augsburg (Germany) in 2023. That school,

titled *The Empirical Study of Romance Varieties*, revolved around three core areas: (i) fieldwork, (ii) data analysis and visualization, and (iii) language *corpus* creation. It brought together faculty from various Latin American and European universities, as well as from the USA: Leonardo Cerno, Marta Fernández Alcaide, Sara Gómez Seibane, Ana Belén Llopis Cardona, Márcia Machado Vieira, Leonardo Marcotulio, Vanessa Meireles, Santiago Sánchez Moreano, Scott Schwenter, and Albert Wall. More importantly, it gathered over thirty students, mostly PhD candidates from different universities worldwide. In the spirit of the summer school, and encouraged by the editor-in-chief of *Diadorim*, Marcia Machado Vieira —whose collaboration and friendship we gratefully acknowledge— we embarked on organizing this special issue. This issue was open not only to the PhD students from the summer school (some of whom are indeed represented here) but also to other doctoral students and early postdocs worldwide, often in collaboration with their advisors.

In our view, it is particularly valuable to bring together and present here the perspectives of young researchers on the various challenges that arise from linguistic studies based on corpora. While these researchers often, as might be expected, “inherit” —quite appropriately—methodological perspectives from their advisors and previous generations of linguists, they nonetheless approach these challenges from new interests and perspectives, having grown up scientifically —unlike previous generations of linguists— in the era of the so-called “digital humanities,” where *corpus* linguistics plays a pivotal role. This influence also shapes the current approach not only to synchronic linguistics but also to diachronic studies (both of which are well represented in this special issue). Additionally, the corpora that merit attention for linguistic study today also reflect the era of new technologies, with studies in this issue even considering social media. Finally, given the recent proliferation of quantitative research based on sociolinguistic corpora in recent years (and decades), meta-analyses are often particularly valuable. This approach, common in other sciences (such as medicine, for comparing prior clinical and experimental studies), is still relatively rare in linguistics but is present in one of the articles included here.

While methodological interests and the empirical perspective, as mentioned, run throughout all the contributions presented by the young researchers in this special issue, their specific linguistic interests —and, of course, their focus on qualitative aspects of both structural and variational linguistic issues— are highly diverse, although the research objects revolve around Ibero-Romance languages and, particularly, Portuguese.

This special issue opens with two articles on **linguistic politeness**, which include the topic of forms of address (see Vismans 2023 on the interrelation between these two areas of study). The latter topic, in the Ibero-Romance context, has especially attracted considerable attention in recent years, resulting in numerous studies and

monographs (see, for example, the recent compilation by Hummel and Lopes (2020) and the relevant entries in the bibliographies compiled and updated annually by Leo Kretzenbacher for the *INAR* network: <https://inarweb.wordpress.com/home/annual-bibliography/>). The first article, Riopedre Ferreira's work on "Mecanismos de cortesia en documentos peruanos del s. XVII", moves from the study of forms of address (which the author has addressed in a previous article) to the consideration of other linguistic strategies for conveying politeness (such as changes in verb tense, the use of modal periphrasis, and the interesting construction "*servirse (+ de) + infinitive*") within the context of generally dispositive documents from the 17th century related to the Viceroyalty of Peru. This study introduces a historical *corpus* of exceptional value, the documents compiled by the Marquess of Risco concerning the governance of Peru, which are now housed in the Special Collections of the University of Seville Library and have been a focus of the university's research group in recent years.

The second article, by Helena Alves Gouvêia and Izete Lehmkuhl Coelho, is titled "Formas De Tratamento Em Cartas Pessoais Catarinenses Escritas Entre 1880 e 1940". This work partly builds on an earlier study by the first author, based on a *corpus* of 130 personal letters collected, transcribed, and edited within the framework of the *Projeto Para a História do Português Brasileiro em Santa Catarina* (PHPB-SC). Among several findings of great relevance for the historical dialectology of Brazilian Portuguese, the study highlights the extremely sparse presence of *você* during the period examined. *Você* was either absent (in intimate, symmetrical relationships, where only *tu* appears, and in upward asymmetrical relationships, dominated by NPs) or marginal (in distant symmetrical relationships—where null subject forms predominate, followed by NPs—and in downward asymmetrical relationships, where *tu* is generally preferred).

The following articles continue with the study of **language in actual use**, delving into specific issues of pragmatics and the stylistic use of prosody and body language as essential components of **communicative acts**. On this latter aspect, the article by Mayara Gak and Maristela da Silva Pinto, titled "Características prosódicas do fonoestilo discurso político e estratégias de aprendizagem retratadas no filme "O Discurso do Rei"" examines the Brazilian dubbed version of the film *The King's Speech*. The authors compare two speeches by the king at different points in the film: one in which he still suffers from stuttering, and a later one, following therapy. Additionally, they apply an extralinguistic approach to analyze the king's body language. Among their findings, they note that the speech style of political discourse is characterized by silent pauses triggered by bodily reflexes, which, according to the authors, discursively serve to bring the speaker and listener closer together. In contrast, filled pauses marked by hesitation or repetition of a discourse element are

less frequent. The study incorporates a didactic approach, resonating with the learning strategies used by the king's mentor in the film to treat stuttering. It concludes that language teaching and learning are optimized by combining technical aspects with affective elements.

Elnaz Gholami, in her article “Exploring Agreement in a Small *Corpus*-Based Study on Social Media”, achieves her goal of, in her words, “enriching the field of *corpus* pragmatics”. Using a *corpus* collected from LinkedIn and Instagram, she develops a multilevel analysis of agreement among participants in communicative acts, which includes not only linguistic data but also extralinguistic and discursive information. The article addresses methodological challenges, such as data representativity concerning sociolinguistic variables of social media users, options for recording contextual information in speech acts, as well as issues related to privacy in data collection on social media. A detailed classification of speech acts expressing agreement in the *corpus* is also provided, specifying their functions.

There is no shortage of studies on **specific morphosyntactic issues**, particularly in the field of personal pronouns in Portuguese, such as the explicit or null use of subject pronouns and the pronominal use of *a gente* (1PL, as an alternative to *nós* in Brazilian varieties). Both topics have a strong tradition—and remain highly relevant—in Portuguese linguistics, approached from syntactic (often generative) or empirical-variationist perspectives, or frequently a combination of both. The study by Eduardo Patrick Rezende dos Reis and Andrey Istvan Mendes Carvalho, titled “O Português Funchalense também tem redobros: reflexões sobre a relação entre o Parâmetro do Sujeito Nulo e o redobro do sujeito”, builds on previous empirical analysis by the authors, who start from the premise that subject doubling can occur in [+Null Subject] languages, demonstrating that this situation applies to the Madeiran variety of Portuguese (or “Insular European Portuguese”) and proceeding to develop an analysis within the framework of “Parametric Sociolinguistics”. The authors conclude that there is evidence for considering a sociolinguistic dichotomy (or more accurately, two poles of a continuum) with tendencies aligning, on one side, with Continental European Portuguese and, on the other, presenting innovative elements potentially related to the migration and interdialectal contact processes characteristic of Madeira's history (following, in this regard, recent studies by Aline Bazenga, *e.g.*, Bazenga 2019). In the specific case studied, two grammars seem to coexist: one closer to European Portuguese, characterized by the null subject tendency (and occasional subject pronoun doubling, mostly limited to 1SG *eu*), and the other with more frequent use of subject pronouns, including frequent instances of doubling co-indexed with a preceding DP.

The other syntactic study is by Elyne Giselle de Santana Lima Aguiar Vitória: “A difusão de *a gente* sujeito na variedade alagoana: um estudo de meta-análise”. Her meta-analytical study standardizes the results of previous quantitative studies, concluding that *a gente* is the preferred variant in Alagoas (Brazil), with lower use in communities with rural characteristics and among less-educated speakers in these communities. The study suggests that there is an ongoing shift towards *a gente* but that the shift is occurring at a slower pace in more rural communities, indicating a change process conditioned by the rural/urban continuum.

While the previous studies delve into the study of variation, this perspective is further developed in the following two studies, which apply the “**pluridimensional analysis methodology**”—a framework originally stemming from linguistic geography and heavily influenced by the German Romance scholar Harald Thun (see, among others, Thun 2011). Amanda Chofard, in “A pluridimensionalidade no *Atlas Linguístico Da Rota Dos Tropeiros*: uma análise das denominações para a profissão daqueles que fazem os utensílios de couro para a lida com a tropa,” presents the linguistic challenges, foundations, and specific interests involved in developing the mentioned atlas. Her results indicate that there are different terms for the profession, but two terms—*guasqueiro* and *coureiro*—are the most common. Regarding the controlled dimensions (diatopic, diasexual, diagenational, ‘diazonal’-diastratic, diaphasic), all were found to exert some influence on the linguistic choices of the informants.

Meanwhile, Cristiane Horst and Natalyê Fonseca Steffen Miranda apply the multidimensional method to a new field in their study, “A descrição do bilinguismo libras-português pela dialetologia pluridimensional: escolhas metodológicas.” Since this type of bilingualism involves two substantially different languages—one oral-auditory language and one visual-spatial language (*Língua Brasileira de Sinais* (Libras))—their study requires a specific methodology for data collection in the field. The authors employ various methods, such as questionnaires, participant observation, and interviews. Among other aspects, their findings highlight gender variation in the use of Libras as well as diatopic differences in graphic competence in this language (with greater prevalence in writing in Chapecó, while the western region has a stronger focus on reading).

The final two articles in this special issue address different aspects of Portuguese **language acquisition**, whether as an L2 or as part of L1 development (while also potentially spoken in a bilingual setting). In “Refletindo sobre ‘erros’ em sala de aula: ativação da consciência metalinguística em aprendizes de português como língua estrangeira (PLE) na correção de duas produções escritas infantis”, Carla Valeria de Souza Faria examines the metalinguistic knowledge of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PLE) learners at the University of Trieste (Italy), in early or intermediate learning stages. Students were exposed to brief written narratives by literacy class

students from private schools in the city of Recife (published in Silva, Morais, and Melo 2005, p. 15), which contained orthographic and textual organization issues—problems that the learners were only sometimes able to identify. The article also seeks to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of using authentic written samples from children in literacy phases to activate metalinguistic awareness in PLE learners as they perform error correction and analysis tasks.

Lastly, this special issue concludes with an article by Ana Luiza Oliveira de Souza, titled “Estágios de aquisição do português em contato com o italiano a partir de análise qualitativa do contínuo da transitividade”. The main objective of this article is to offer explanations regarding the specific stages of Brazilian Portuguese acquisition as a heritage language in Italy, through a description and qualitative analysis of the phenomenon of transitivity. The study, which presents an excerpt from Oliveira de Souza’s doctoral research (2023), details the constitution of the “Brazilian Portuguese as a Heritage Language – Casa do Brasil in Florence” *corpus* (*Corpus PBLH-CBFlor*). It combines perspectives from sociolinguistics and cognitive-functional linguistics, including the understanding of discourse levels in constructions. Finally, the hypotheses related to the stages of Portuguese language acquisition as a heritage language—namely, *activation* and *reactivation* stages—are attested, which manifest as variation patterns in the language within a contact environment.

The articles collected here form a coherent body of work, emphasizing not only the description of the methodology applied to each study but also a detailed account of the challenges and processes encountered along the way. The diverse approaches to empirical linguistics are unified by expertise in *corpus*-based analysis, as well as by the highly promising scientific careers of the young researchers featured here. Their studies also serve as previews of current lines of research—albeit indebted to those of the past—that are likely to occupy many more pages in the near future.

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