



## PRESENTATION

### THE LINGUISTIC MEANING IN PERSPECTIVE

This thematic review organized by Maria Lucia Leitão de Almeida, Ana Paula Quadros Gomes and Jorge Luiz Ferreira Lisboa Júnior is dedicated to Semantics.

The works that make up this language dossier present semantic analyses from the perspectives of cognitive semantics and formal semantics, with a particular focus on Portuguese, assuming different scopes for the objects under study. Although cognitive and formal semantics have alternative views on semantic phenomena, a dialogue between them can be very instigating and productive. Both models provide reliable results, contributing to the scientific knowledge about the meaning in natural languages and, especially, of languages still very little described from a semantic and pragmatic point of view, such as Portuguese.

We wish to encourage, with this issue, an integrating practice that favors the dialogue between semanticists of different aspects. This dialogue is well suggested by our honored brazilian semanticist Rodolfo Ilari. In his words:

If I were talking only about Semantics, I would say that it is a path of a lot of dispersion; it's a path where people work, many times, alone. They don't have a habit that would be fundamental, a habit that is from a person who works with a certain kind of Semantics to come clean with other kind of people who work with another kind of Semantics. So, things don't work as communicating vessels; they work as closed vessels.<sup>1</sup> (ILARI, 2018, p.7-8)

By integrating into this dossier different ways of doing semantics, we aim to create a symbolic space of interlocution and, at the same time, to offer the reader a panoramic view of a

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1 Original: "Se eu fosse a falar só de Semântica, eu diria que é um caminho de muita dispersão, é um caminho onde as pessoas trabalham, muitas vezes, sozinhas. Não têm um hábito que seria fundamental, um hábito que é de uma pessoa que trabalha com um certo tipo de Semântica abrir o jogo para outro tipo de pessoas que trabalham com outro tipo de Semântica. Então, as coisas não funcionam como vasos comunicantes, funcionam como vasos fechados." (ILARI, 2018, p. 7-8).



landscape of studies of meaning in which different perspectives of analysis coexist.

In fact, semantics, like linguistics in general, can be well represented through the felicitous metaphor proposed by Dirk Geeraerts (2010):

The academic landscape of linguistics is a mountainous one. Broad vales where the main streams of research flow branch off into side valleys and even smaller dales where theories are refined and specific topics pursued. Working in their own dell of specialization, scholars will be well aware of their local disciplinary river system, but they may be less acquainted with research that lies beyond the mountain range of their own theoretical environment. They will be familiar with the highest peaks of alternative frameworks, but they may be less informed about the riches and challenges that may be found in their less visible regions.

Certainly, in this landscape, the reader will notice the diversity in fundamental questions about what is meant by meaning, about the relationship between grammar and the cognition, between the semantics and pragmatics, and will visit the different visions of semantic compositionality. Therefore, we think that a beautiful compliment to science is precisely the possibility of a diverse dialogue, not with the aim of promoting the circumscription of territories, however “natural” this might seem to certain scientific domains, but with that of advancing knowledge, of building together a more advanced (provisional) knowledge.

The articles that compose this dossier do not exhaust, but quite represent the state of the art of research in cognitive and formal semantics nowadays. The reader will access a variety of themes and phenomena that comes from the contribution of American, Brazilian and European scientific institutions.

We began with Rodolfo Ilari, our honoree (Special Section). Ilari made a decisive contribution to a linguistic studies agenda that explicitly focused on Portuguese semantics, in addition to having trained several semanticists in Brazil. Because of his representativeness among us semanticists, he opens the *Dossiê de Semântica* with a project study entitled “*A semântica do passado composto em Português*” (“The semantics of the past composed in Portuguese”) (Research Project), in which he revisits an esteemed subject to him, about which he jocularly declares that “was missed”. We are lucky for being able to publish it, making possible its reading. The *rule of thumb* in the studies about this verbal time points to a simple routine. However, the author’s aim is to show that there is an iterative and a durative reading, and they can be articulated together. This purpose is achieved, for the research offers an elegant description of the phenomenon in the theoretical framework of Formal Semantics.

Next section, there are two interviews. Both of them bring outstanding researchers in the respective theoretical currents, as well as authors of fundamental books: Gilles Fauconnier and Gennaro Chierchia.

The first interview shows the perspective of Cognitive Semantics, Gilles Fauconnier, one

of its pillars, talks to the researchers Maria Lucia Leitão de Almeida (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) and Jorge Luiz Ferreira Lisboa Junior (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro). Fauconnier is a distinguished professor emeritus of Cognitive Science in the Department of Cognitive Science at the University of California, San Diego. He is the author of crucial books about general semantics and cognitive science, such as *Mental Spaces* (1985 [1994]), *Mappings in Thought and Language* (1997) and *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (2002). The latter in a partnership with Mark Turner. He published, recently, through Brill Books, *Ten Lectures on Cognitive Construction of Meaning* (2018), in which he discusses his findings and stimulates new insights for research in the area.

In this interview, titled *Semantics and Cognition*, Fauconnier addresses fundamental topics in cognitive semantics within the theory of *mental spaces* and *conceptual blending*. The cognitive construction of linguistic meaning is the central theme of the interview, and the reader will have the opportunity of following Fauconnier's generous reasoning in a tour of phenomena widely discussed in his scientific agenda, such as presupposition, modals, space builders, implicit communication and "invisible meaning" in implicatures, the relationship between metonymies and metonymic compressions, conceptual metaphors, the role of conceptual blending in the interpretation of grammatical constructions, among other topics of relevance for the understanding of semantic phenomena. This interview widely covers the cognitive semantics practiced by Fauconnier, and can be useful to linguists and cognitive scientists in general, as well as to young people who wish to become cognitive semanticists.

The interviewee who presents the perspective of Formal Semantics is Gennaro Chierchia (Harvard), considered "the most beloved linguists of our times, who has proposed some of the most exciting ideas in semantics."<sup>2</sup> More than an interview, the talk between Chierchia and Roberta Pires de Oliveira (UFSC/UFPR) — who was a visiting professor at Harvard, at his invitation, in 2016, and who is his research partner — goes through the most fundamental topics of contemporary formal semantics, providing a travel guide for those interested in this area of linguistics. For Chierchia, the progress on several substantive points in recent decades has been so great that nowadays we can rely on the formalisms we share at the same time that we are able to remain neutral on basic semantic issues, as, for example, what are, in fact, truth conditions. This conversation between the two semanticists should not be missed, as it addresses themes as important as Boolean conjunctions, type shifting, generalized quantifiers, the (non) universality of determinants, the theory of attachment and (co)reference, the argument-event, the argument structure, adverbial modification, thematic roles, nominal modification, relative clauses, adjectives, vagueness, fitting, complements, de se/de re readings, modality, presuppositions, implications, etc.

The dossier presents two parts that facilitate the vision of the landscape: a section dedicated

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gf.org/fellows/all-fellows/gennaro-chierchia/>

to Cognitive Semantics and a section dedicated to Formal Semantics, which we present below.

The articles section in cognitive semantics starts with a paper by Danqing Huang, Dirk Geeraerts and Weiwei Zhang, entitled *A semantic analysis of the FIRE radical in Chinese*. Based on the assumption of the centrality of the concept of *fire* to human civilization, including Chinese, the authors analyze the semantic extensions of the ideogram when it is a root for compound words. It is interesting to note that, in the specific case of Chinese, the radicals, which come from independent “words”, when they become bases for others, take on a broader meaning and indicate a process of categorization of the concept. Using a wide database, the authors establish the radial category that structures global extensions of FIRE as radical.

The second work of the section on cognitive semantics is the study by Rita Szabó-Brdar and Mário Brdar, entitled *The Bruce Willis of Sandwiches: the Y of X is Y of Z construction on its journey towards a paragon model, as one way of achieving intersubjectivity*. The authors discuss a type of XYZ grammatical construction, as in “Is sad singleton Vladimir Putin the Jennifer Aniston of European politics?” or “Milka is the Mercedes of chocolates”. According to Szabó-Brdar & Brdar, these XYZ constructions involve figurative cases that depend on creative mapping among the reference elements that instantiate the NP’s of the construction. These mappings consist of comparisons (metaphors) based on *paragon* metonymic cognitive models (LAKOFF, 1987). For the mapping between X and Y to be successful, it is necessary that Y be interpreted according to the “best model of”, so that it is then comparable to X. However, this “best model of”, in the authors’ proposal, is a *quasi-paragon*, since it does not correspond to models necessarily shared *offline*, but created situationally for conceptual mapping, which may become conventional models or not. Therefore, the felicity of these constructions would also be related to the intersubjective alignment of the speakers for the *online* negotiation of categories that are built for the comparison of Y to X.

The article also discusses the problem of “double-edged comparisons that can cut both ways” in mapping between proper names, X and Y (VEALE, 2014). Although the authors do not assume the integral model of blending, they admit that the double-edged comparison refers both to a metonymy-based comparison of Y to X and to an X to Y comparison for the creation of a humorous effect or for a negative perlocution. The humoristic or negative effect would be caused precisely by unexpected pairings between two entities. The proposed discussion is very interesting because it offers an alternative analysis to the blending and it involves authentic data of linguistic use, with a wealth of details.

In the article *Provocações morfológicas à Gramática Cognitiva* (“Morphological provocations to Cognitive Grammar”), Janderson Lemos de Souza situates semantics in morphology inside a more recent model of cognitive grammar (LANGACKER, 2019). One of the author’s provocations — among others — is the idea that semantics and morphology do not exactly constitute an interface between two linguistic components, as a structuralist and serial view of grammar might suppose. The author proposes, in fact, the framework of semantics over morphology. To support this strong hypothesis in his argumentative orientation,

he reflects on the semantics of morphological constructions and on the polysemy in morphology, as well as signaling to the formation of networks of morphological constructions, practicing a constructional semantics. Lemos de Souza bases his proposal on the symbolic motivation, arguing that morphology should be considered an epiphenomenon of processes of symbolization of the conceptual structure, that is, a materialization of semantics (LANGACKER, 1987, 1991). The idea is that semantic-conceptual processes have repercussions or morphological manifestations, with impact on the organization of grammar, as in the case of autonomy-dependence relationships that act on the morphological design itself.

The article *Redobramento, recursão e verbos de movimento em Português* (“Doubling, recursion and motion verbs in Portuguese”), by Verena Kewitz, is based on the semantic typology of movement proposed by Talmy (2000) for the analysis of redoubled path constructions in Portuguese. The doubled path constructions are those that code the path information in the verb and in prepositional or adverbial expressions, such as “*sair para fora*”, “*entrar para dentro*” etc. These constructions usually do not receive proper attention because they are traditionally considered as pleonastic forms; however, the author demonstrates that such constructions are semantically more complex — and more interesting — than the reductionist characterization of pleonasm could suppose. The author argues that the redoubled path displays semantic *recursion*, based on the principle of recursion proposed by Castilho (2015), in the context of multisystemic grammar. Kewitz also positions herself on the semantic difference between doubled path constructions, which would involve recursion, and not doubled without recursion, as “*entrou dentro de*” vs. “*entrou em*”, “*saiu pra fora*” vs. “*saiu fora*”, and puts forward the *construal* hypothesis (TALMY, 2000). According to the hypothesis raised, the constructions of doubled and un-doubled path would put in evidence *distinct perspectives* of the speaker about the constitution of a complex scene of movement. The author also notes that such patterns of doubled path, contrary to traditional expectations, occur conventionally in formal texts of archaic Portuguese, her analysis cutout, based on a well-developed study of documents based on discursive traditions. The study also presents other strong implications of the analysis for the notion of “redoubling” (MORAES DE CASTILHO, 2005) and for the notion of “recursion” of Castilho (op.cit) through the framework of cognitive semantics, considering the possibility of further research on the phenomenon

The article “*Plasticidade discursivo-textual: mecanismos de reanálise*” (“Textual and discursive plasticity: mechanisms of reanalysis”), by Graça Rio-Torto, presents a functional and cognitive analysis on processes of *plasticity* in linguistic meaning, which involve semantic change and lexical-grammatical reanalysis. The plasticity to which the author refers is an active phenomenon in linguistic semantics, concerning the fluctuation of nouns and adjectives that are recategorized in their classes and prototypical functions as referencers and qualifiers, for the implementation of new semantic functions, such as predicatives and intensifiers, like “*uma senhora aula*”, “*um puta professor*”, “*uma bosta de aula*”, “*o livro vendeu horrores*” etc. To describe this phenomenon of plasticity, the article establishes a connection between the functionalism *strictu sensu* and the models of cognitive linguistics, namely, the cognitive

semantics, specifically that of Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and Lakoff (1987), with the proposition of prototypical categories, conceptual metaphors and metonymies, and the construction grammar of Lakoff (1987, chapter 13) and Goldberg (1995, 2006). Rio-Torto proposes that the motivation of the plasticity phenomenon, which he defends to be discursive-textual, is of expressive and conceptual order. It is out of the necessity of expressing an evaluation that the speaker uses a prototypically referential term as predicative or prototypically qualifying as intensifier; and it is also out of cognitive motivation, insofar as the semantic-functional plasticity is due to the very cognitive flexibility of constructing radial linguistic categories through metaphorical and metonymic processes.

The article “*A palavra como arma: metáforas de guerra na conceptualização do antagonismo verbal*” (“WORD IS WEAPON: war metaphors in the conceptualization of verbal antagonism”), by Solange Coelho Vereza, analyzes different instantiations of “palavra” (“word”) in *memes*. The analysis of the *palavra* as a metaphorical expression in use allowed the identification of the conceptual metaphor “PALAVRA É ARMA” (“WORD IS WEAPON”) as a productive metaphor. When it comes to verbal antagonisms, ‘words’ can *hurt*, *injure* or *kill*, as if ‘word’ were a *weapon*. There are different possibilities of mapping from the source domain (‘WEAPON’) onto the target domain (‘WORD’) which licence different metaphorical expressions such as, for example “palavra é arma” (“word is weapon”) or “palavra é uma arma sem gatilho” (“word is a weapon without a trigger”), according to the author’s examples. For Vereza, the *frame* “weapon” as the source domain is, in turn, a cutout of the most encompassing *war frame*. *War* is the structuring *frame* of another metaphor involving verbal antagonism, DISCUSSION IS WAR, widely discussed since the proposal of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). It is conventional in our culture to conceptualize conflicts in human communication in terms of a “verbal fight”. Linguistic examples like “ele *venceu* o debate” (“he *won* the debate”) or “o que ele disse foi um *tapa na cara*” (“what he said was a *slap in the face*”) may metaphorically construct the scene of verbal antagonism, in view of the metaphor of an “discussion” as “war”. Vereza will then propose a relationship between conceptual metaphors, in which the conceptualization of WORD IS WEAPON is anchored on the more *schematic* conceptual metaphor of DISCUSSION IS WAR. The metaphors in use described by Vereza also demonstrate the conceptual substrate of force-dynamics (TALMY, 1988), the embodied basis of the metaphor of verbal antagonism. Although this is not the central focus of her analysis, the author indicates the force-dynamic as fundamental for alternative analysis. Thus, Vereza demonstrates the relevance of the balance between embodied approaches to metaphor and cognitive-discursive approaches (HAMPTE, 2017, cap.1) <sup>34</sup>.

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3 HAMPTE, B. Embodiment and Discourse: Dimensions and Dynamics of Contemporary Metaphor Theory. In HAMPTE, B. (Ed), *Metaphor Embodied Cognition and Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2017).

4 The field of studies of the conceptual metaphor counts in its evolution with theoretical and methodological approaches in competition (embodied, discursive, multimodal approaches...), demonstrating the effervescence of cognitive semantics. Hampte aligns himself to a conciliatory vision between the different positions on the conceptual metaphor.



Next, we present Aurelina Ariadne Domingues Almeida's article titled "*A categorização em perspectiva sociocognitiva de um africanismo do Português do Brasil: o item léxico xereca*" ("The categorization of an Africanism in Brazilian Portuguese from a sociocognitive perspective: the lexical item *xereca*"). This study proposes a sociocognitive approach to the categorization of the lexical item "xereca" (term for the female sexual organ), focusing on its different uses in interaction and discourse. The sociocognitive approach, in general, develops an integrated comprehension of the facets of human categorization, at the same time linguistic, cognitive, and cultural. The uses of the lexical item "xereca" encompass various aspects of categorization, among them the prohibition — as a taboo term — and the free circulation in different areas of discourse, in a way that it is possible to identify, in the categorization of this lexical variant, a differentiated *status* of conventionality and cognitive entrenchment in relation to its covariants in the domain of words referring to the female genital-sexual organ, such as "*buceta*", "*vulva*", among others. By presenting a qualitative analysis of the lexical variant "xereca" in situations of interaction and discourse, the author identifies singularities that are fundamental for a finer understanding of the ecology of meanings that circulate socially in relation to the lexicon item "xereca".

We finish the cognitive semantics section with the work "*A metáfora no ensino: uma análise de seu potencial como recurso pedagógico em videoaulas do Youtube*" ("*Metaphor in teaching: an analysis of its potential as a pedagogical resource in Youtube video lessons*"), by John Schabaram and Rove Chishman. This article focuses on the role of metaphor in Youtube video lessons, in the task of representing scientific concepts, proposing a typology for the metaphorical expressions identified in techniques, subtechniques, and constitutive theory, according to Cameron (2003). This study will certainly be an invaluable contribution to those who work with analysis of conceptual metaphors produced *online*.

The articles on formal semantics address issues related to the generation of meaning, in a formal approach, in three distinct languages: the Cape Verdean from Sotavento, the Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) and the Brazilian Portuguese (PB) all of which are insufficiently described at present, especially regarding their semantics, and in different degrees, all candidates for being considered minority languages. The articles on formal semantics deal with quite diverse phenomena: the necessity, or lack of necessity, of the presence of determinants in nominal argumentational phrases, the influence of directional prepositional phrases on the telicity of eventualities, the interpretation of yes-no answers, the interpretative distinctions between aspectual classes, and also two questions related to the expressiveness of adjectives — the permeability of the frontier between the functions of intensifying adverb and adjective, when it comes to bad language, as well as the licensing of adjectives in exclamatives.

From the theoretical point of view, multiple and distinct choices coexist in this group of articles: a classical semantics for argumentative nominal phrases, a semantics of directional vectors composing the telos of eventualities, the idea that semantics is a product of syntax, a classical Vendlerian semantics for the distinction of aspectual classes and a semantics of expressiveness, used both to analyze common uses of bad words and for the insertion of

adjectives in short exclamatory sentences. Two of the works, the one on Libras and the one on adjectives in exclamatory sentences, resort to experiments that needed to be designed and run before their results could be reported and discussed in this dossier. Thus, the experimental semantics is also represented in this section, dedicated to formal semantics, completing a varied menu.

The article “*Os Nomes nus em Caboverdiano*” (“The naked names in Cape Verdean”), by Wânia Miranda, precisely illustrates the fallibility of universal determinants (BARWISE; COOPER, 1981), describing nominals of the language (or variety) spoken in Sotavento and its region, where arguments do not present determinants. The expansion of knowledge about languages insufficiently described, minority languages, such as languages of Native American, in the U.S., and African languages, overturned the first generation universals, which projected regularities found in European languages as linguistic universals, increasing the repertoire of varieties and the challenge of the search for semantic universals.

In the article “*Sobre as preposições de trajetória do Português Brasileiro: tipologia e valor aspectual*” (“On the trajectories of Brazilian Portuguese: typology and aspectual value”), Thayse Letícia Ferreira and Renato Miguel Basso focus on the influence of the Brazilian Portuguese (BP) trajectory prepositions represented by ‘de’, ‘por’, ‘até’ and ‘para’ on the aspectual properties of events. The authors use a vector typology in the style of Zwarts (2005, 2008), concluding that non-cumulative prepositions and prepositional phrases directed to the TARGET of the trajectory, as long as they include this point in their denotation, may alter the telicity of the event.

In her article “*O Sistema responsivo do Português Brasileiro*” (“The responsive system of Brazilian Portuguese”), Lílian Teixeira de Souza relies on syntax as the source of interpretations, assuming, with Holmberg (2013, 2016), that the syntax of answers to yes-no questions is similar to the syntax of questions. Languages, according to that author, can be typologically divided between truth-based and polarity-based systems. Considering that BP presents three types of denials, depending on the number and position of negative items in the sentence — Neg VP; Neg VP Neg and VP Neg —, the article discusses how to insert the Brazilian Portuguese (BP) responsive system in this typology. Teixeira de Souza defends that it is the structural position, rather than the traits, present or not in the items, that leads to one interpretation or to the other.

Gabriel Simonassi and Luciana Sanchez-Mendes, in the article “*A Duratividade na expressão aspectual em Libras*” (“Durability in aspectual expression in Libras”), seek to identify distinctive semantic traits of the aspectual classes (VENDLER, 1957) in Brazilian Sign Language (Libras), arguing that the verbal predicates of the classes of *accomplishment* and activities in Libras behave differently and influence the aspectual expression of this language, both in the lexical and grammatical spheres. The method of controlled elicitation (MATTHEWSON, 2004) was used to collect data from minority languages in a systematic and objective way. The consultant opted for different strategies to express the durativity: in predicates of *accomplishments* and activities, a sign indicating the passage of time was adopted;



while in predicates with directed movement (telic and atelic), other strategies associated to the grammatical aspect were used, such as indicating a preparatory phase for the event.

The article “*Putá: a sintaxe e a semântica de um controverso intensificador*” (“‘Putá’: the syntax and semantics of an controverso intensifier”), by Renato Miguel Basso and Luisandro Mendes de Souza, discusses the intensifying expression ‘*putá*’, based on a formal approach to meaning. The authors argue that, even when preceding a noun within the nominal syntagma, the term modifies the combination of the noun with an adjective, which may or may not be explicitly present. With the implicit adjective, the evaluation is positive; the explicit adjective contributes, with its semantics, for a positive or negative evaluation of the noun. For the authors, there is a structural ambiguity in syntaxes such as “*uma putá festa legal*” which can denote “a very good and cool party” or “a very cool party”. The truth conditions of the sentence include the contribution of “putá”, which raises the contextual pattern of the scale given by the adjective; at the same time, on the expressive level, “putá” indicates a subjective involvement of the speaker.

Finally, Tatiane Gonçalves Sudré, in her paper “A expressividade no Português Brasileiro sob um olhar experimental” (“Expressivity in Brazilian Portuguese under an experimental perspective”), examines the licensing of adjectives in highly selective contexts, such as those that denote a certain degree of expressivity. Starting from the fact that short exclamatory sentences (“Que X!”) accept virtually all names, but few adjectives (Que lindo! / Que grande! / \*Que algébrico! / \*Que rodoviário!), the author sought in an experimental study conducted in English (BRASOVEANU; RETT, 2016), which aimed to investigate the nature of expressivity in that language, from adjective constructions and different types of adjectives, the inspiration to develop her own experimental research in BP. The results of the experiments indicate that being a grade adjective (KENNEDY; McNALLY, 2005) is a *sine qua non* condition for the adjective to be licensed in short exclamatives, and that, among the grade adjectives, those of relative grade are the most conducive to expressivity.

Through these six articles, we obtain a small overview of the paths of formal research in Brazil, with an example of the rich range of methodological paths and topics of interest.

And, this way, we close this semantic dossier, very happy with its representativeness. To conclude, we subscribe to Ilari’s words (2018): “As for me, it’s not that I believe in one type of Semantics. I really think that several types of Semantics are good and complete each other<sup>5</sup>” (ILARI, 2018, p.3).

Good reading to all.

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5 Original: “Quanto a mim, não é que eu acredite num só tipo de Semântica. Acho mesmo que vários tipos de Semântica são bons e se completam.” (ILARI, 2018, p.3).

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