

The Latin-American Association of Philology and Linguistics
(ALFAL)

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ALFAL has been created during a meeting held by the University of Chile's *Instituto de Filología* (Viña Del Mar, January 20-25, 1964). According to ALFAL first President, the Brazilian linguist Joaquim Mattoso Câmara Jr., the idea of its foundation had been previously discussed by a group of Latin-American linguists, during its attendance of the *Ninth International Congress of Linguistics* (Cambridge, MA, August 1962) Câmara Jr. (1969: 15). The main concern at that moment was to foster investigations in such areas as Spanish, Portuguese and Amerindian Linguistics, Philology, Latin-American Literature and the teaching of languages.

Shorter after ALFAL foundation, Donald Solá and other leaderships launched the *Interamerican Program of Linguistics and Teaching of Languages* (PILEI, in its Spanish-Portuguese acronym), again in Chile, August 10-14, 1970; see *Actas* (1971).

From then on, ALFAL and PILEI worked together, although in different ways. ALFAL with its biannual Congresses. PILEI with its collective projects of research, Institutes and Symposia. The disappearance of PILEI in 1981 led to a change that made ALFAL host the projects of research previously managed by its partner.

The Present Directory is composed by Ataliba T. de Castilho, President, State University of São Paulo / Brazil; José Moreno de Alba, Secretary, National Autonomous University of México / México; Orlando Alba, Brigham Young University / USA. The Directory is helped in its decisions by the Advisory Committee, presently integrated by Adolfo Elizaincín (Uruguay), Alba Espinoza Valencia (Chile), Carmen Silva-Corvalán (USA), Germán de Granda (Spain), José Antonio Samper Padilla (Great Canaries, Spain), and Paola Bentivoglio (Venezuela). Regional Deputies help the Directory to get in touch with the 1,400 affiliates, mostly of them Latin America residents, although ALFAL has associates also in North America, Europe and some countries in Asia.

Up to now ALFAL organised twelve congresses: I (Montevideo, Uruguay, 1966); II (São Paulo, Brazil, 1969); III (San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1971); IV (Lima, Peru, 1975); V (Caracas, Venezuela, 1978); VI (Phoenix, USA, 1981); VII (San Domingos, Dominican Republic, 1984); VIII (Tucumán, Argentina, 1987); IX (Campinas, Brazil, 1990); X Vera Cruz, Mexico, 1993); XI (Las Palmas of Great Canaries, 1996); XII (Santiago, Chile, 1999). Coming XIII Congress is scheduled for Costa Rica, 2002. All proceedings have been published: *Actas de la primera reunión latinoamericana de lingüística y filología* (enero de 1964), Bogotá: Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 1973; *I Congreso de ALFAL / Tercer Simposio de PILEI*, México, 1975; *Atas do II Congresso Internacional da ALFAL* (janeiro de 1969), São Paulo: Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas da Universidade de São Paulo, 1987; *Actas del III congreso de ALFAL* (junio de 1971), San Juan: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1976; *Lingüística y Educación. Actas del IV congreso internacional de ALFAL* (enero de 1975), Lima:

Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 1978; *Actas del V Congreso Internacional de ALFAL* (enero de 1978), Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela / Instituto de Filología Andrés Bello, 1986; *Actas del VI Congreso Internacional de ALFAL* (septiembre de 1981), México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1989; *Actas del VII Congreso Internacional de ALFAL. Homenaje a Pedro Henríquez Ureña.* (1984), Santo Domingo, República Dominicana: Editorial Universidad Nacional Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Tomo I, 1984, Tomo II, 1989; *Actas del VIII Congreso Internacional de ALFAL* (septiembre, 1987), Tucumán: a cargo de la Asociación, 1999; *Actas do IX Congresso Internacional da ALFAL* (agosto de 1990), Campinas: Universidade Estadual de Campinas / Instituto de Estudos da Linguagem, vols. I e II, 1992; vols. III, IV, V, 1998; *Actas del X Congreso Internacional de ALFAL* (1993), México, UNAM, 1996; *Actas del XI Congreso Internacional de ALFAL* (1996), Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, Universidad de Las Palmas, 3 vols., 1999.

Besides its proceedings, ALFAL sponsors the annual journal *Lingüística*, 11 numbers published, and periodically publishes the *Cuadernos de Lingüística*, 9 volumes, and the *Boletín Informativo*, 9 numbers + 2, in the 'new series'.

The Following Research Committees are effective: *Comisión de estudio coordinado de la norma lingüística urbana culta* (Juan M. Lope Blanch / México), *Comisión de estudio sociolingüístico del español de España y de América* (Francisco Moreno Fernández and Carmen Silva-Corvalán / Spain and USA), *Comisión para la difusión internacional del español por radio, televisión y prensa* (Raúl Ávila / México), *Comisión para la Historia del Español de América y Canarias* (Elena Rojas de Mayer / Argentina), *Comissão para a His-*

tória do Português Brasileiro (Ilza Ribeiro / Brasil), *Comissão de Gramática do Português Falado no Brasil* (Maria Helena Moura Neves / Brasil), *Comisión de Lenguas Amerindias I – México, América Central y Caribe* (Ramón Arzápalo, México), *Comissão de Línguas Ameríndias II – América do Sul* (Lucy Séki / Brasil), *Comisión de Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza de la Lengua Materna* (Pedro Benítez / México), *Comisión Varilex, Variación léxica del español* (Hiroto Ueda / Japón), *Comissão de Historiografia Lingüística* (Cristina Altman / Brasil).

On the eve of a new century, what additional roles must be played by ALFAL? The following issues will certainly draw the attention of both Directory and associates.

1. Deepening the knowledge of Latin-American linguistic complexity

ALFAL operates in a geographical area that was lingüistically complex, even before European settlers arrived. Huge populations spoke thousand of Amerindian languages; some out of them survived the conquerors. Millions still speak the “*lenguas ‘mayores’ o ‘generales’*, [*como el*] *azteca, maya-quiché, quechua, guarani, mapuche y chibcha*” (Cerrón-Palomino 1990: 415).

Romance languages brought in by Latin-Europeans gave birth to the “*New Romania*”, which means 300,000,000 Spanish speaking in Hispano-America, 167,000,000 Portuguese speaking in Brazil, not to mention millions of French speaking inhabitants in Canada. Conservative as well as innovative trends began to shape such languages after their contacting Amerindian and African languages in the new environment created by three centuries of colonization, followed by intensive immigration during the 19th century.

This background provides several issues to be discussed by ALFAL's Research Committees: (1) improvement of our knowledge on Amerindian languages; (2) acquaintance with transformations of Romance languages; (3) discussion of the importance of Latin American literature. Let us take a look to first two issues.

Amerindian Linguistics has proven an important improvement during last twenty years. If a Latin-American linguist is allowed to give a real contribution to the linguistic theory this will certainly occur in the Amerindian ground. Researchers in this field usually face enormous difficulties to do their job, but even so they managed to document and analyze more than half the living Amerindian languages. A problem not sufficiently discussed is the involvement of Indian themselves in the work of documenting and describing their own languages. According to Muñoz (1990: 429), "*resulta manifiesta la ausencia de los hablantes indígenas en la teoría y práctica de la investigación lingüística, tendencia que abre el riesgo de una intervención manipuladora o tergiversadora del investigador en torno a la situación en estudio. Hace falta, por tanto, una política de integración y formación de agentes-investigadores indígenas en la práctica científica de la lingüística*". About Amerindian languages in Brazil, see Rodrigues (1986) and the extensive report of Séki (1999).

Latin-American linguists became concerned by the growth of urban communities, whose figure rose at the beginning of the century from 20% to present day 80%. What would be the consequences for Latin-American Spanish and Portuguese when they shift from predominant rural to predominant urban varieties? Juan M. Lope Blanch, from the "El Colegio de México" and former President of ALFAL, gave this an answer, launching in 1996 the Hispano-Ameri-

can-wide *Proyecto de Estudio de la Norma Urbana Culta* (Lope Blanch 1964). He inspired Brazilian linguists to work in a similar project, locally known as NURC project, which took place in 1969 (Castilho 1990). Huge amount of interviews have been recorded and analyzed by both projects, allowing a better understanding on how spoken language works. This happened years before American and European linguists got acquainted with the job. In Brazil, a new activity began in early '88, based on the NURC materials, aiming at writing collectively a reference grammar of the Brazilian Spoken Portuguese, to be described in its phonological, morphological, syntactic and textual grounds. Seven volumes have been published, the eighth volume is in print, and up to the coming year all the essays previously published will be consolidated in five new books. Brazilian Portuguese will be the first Romance language to have its cultivated spoken variety fully described: Abaurre & Rodrigues (Ed., in print), Castilho (Ed. 1990, 1993), Castilho & Basílio (Ed. 1996), Ilari (Ed. 1992), Kato (Ed. 1996), Koch (Ed. 1997), Neves (Ed. 1999).

The descriptions of the spoken modality of Brazilian Portuguese spotted several characteristics which led to the study of history of both Romance languages. Two new collective projects began: the *Project of the History of Latin American Spanish*, followed shortly after by the *Project for the History of Brazilian Portuguese*.

The first proposals on the history of Latin-American Spanish were offered by Guitarte (1969, 1971) and Lope Blanch (1975). The researches began in the late eighties, under the chairmanship of Beatriz Fontanella de Weinberg, substituted after her death by Elena Rojas de Mayer, both from Argentina (Fontanella de Weinberg 1990; Elizaincín 1992, 1998).

Historical Linguistics witnessed a rapid growth in Brazil, thanks to the work of Joaquim Mattoso Câmara Jr., Rosa Virgínia Mattos e Silva, Fernando Tarallo, Carlos Alberto Faraco, Mary Kato and others: (Câmara Jr. 1972; Mattos e Silva 1987, 1990, 1992; Tarallo 1985, 1990; Faraco 1991; Roberts & Kato Eds. 1993. A nation-wide project began in the nineties (Castilho, Ed. 1998; Mattos e Silva 1998, Ed. 2000; Alkmin, Ed. 2000).

One may recognize that collective projects are actually a big success, and ALFAL played an important role in this matter. Latin-American linguists developed a new way of making science, despite the difficulties they face due to budget cuts their universities are undergoing. I strongly believe that the search of new partnerships could be one out of the answers we can give to such difficulties. The Research Committees will play a decisive role in this issue, integrating different specialists inside ALFAL, on the basis of new researches to be proposed.

2. The teaching of languages

As a multilingual continent, Latin America offers a bunch of problems in the teaching of languages. Let us have a quick look first at the teaching directed to the minorities, and afterwards to the teaching of foreign languages.

Roughly speaking, Indigenous education experienced two moments. First, the national government thought it was their task to ‘civilize’ Amerindians, integrating them in the dominant community, by imposing them the Portuguese language. From the seventies, on, bilingual education took place, allowing a ‘explosion of differences’,

which lead to the construction of social identities different from the ‘national’ one. The role of the linguist changed to one of concurring to the *elucidação conceitual da reflexão lingüística conduzida pelos próprios falantes, que se constituem em pesquisadores de suas próprias línguas* (Oliveira 1997).

The general globalization we are presently witnessing brings to the teaching of foreign languages quite interesting debates. The European Council of Languages recently stated that monolingual citizens risk to suffer from a kind of ‘linguistics defficiency’ in the coming century if they remain as such. Each one has to be proficient in at least two foreing languages. But if we simply transfer the needs of multilinguism to Latin America, what languages have to be taught? According to Born (1996), at least Spanish, Portuguese and Guarany must be taught, if the Mercosul keeps its present extension. Anyway, the country members will face debates on such issues as the improvement of its school systems, the creation of a favorable environment for the intensive teaching of foreign languages (for instance, the teaching of History, Geography, Natural Sciences in languages other than the mother tongue), having its personnel properly prepared. Linguistics will be of great help in this discussions. ALFAL could provide the adequate frame for this, as it did in its almost four decades of life.

3. Getting involved with a globalized world

Last decade knew some political transformations just unbelievable some years before. Nations which warred each other and developed a deep loss of confidence as to their neighbors are

giving now strong steps toward an economic and politic integration. Worlwide development of such institutions like ASEAN, NAFTA, EU and Mercosul indicates that traditional divisions between regional, national and international cultures cannot be kept, “*surgindo terceiras culturas desterritorializadas como a nova cultura empresarial, a eletrônica, a ecologia e múltiplas expressões de sincretismos e hibridações*” (Hamel 1995).

Hamel’s predictable syncretisms and hybridizations could be thought of as an important target for Latin American scientific associations such as ALFAL. As a result of centuries of colonial life, countries from the subcontinent developed a sort of indifference as to their neighbors, as well as an entrenched ‘living alone’ way of life, even on scientific grounds. Now the time has come to face this political culture and try to adjust it to modern challenges. ALFAL may play in this respect a modest but vital role, assembling its associates around important themes of research. Changing a culture is not an easy task, and this one could be just a first step, backed by the success of our collective research projects.

Inside the Mercosul, a cultural policy debate is in its way, led by the *Universities Association of the Montevideo Group* (AUGM). This Association has been created in 1991, shortly after the Asuncion Treaty was signed, giving birth to the Mercosul. AUGM aims to improve the formation of human resources devoted to the research, the transference of knowledge among participants, as well as contributing to the process of academic integration in all levels (Meneghel 1998). Several universities take place in the Association, which presently discusses a linguistic policy for the subcontinent. ALFAL could help in the debate, since it assembles other countries not participat-

ing in Mercosul yet. In short, integrating people through the research is presently a clear challenge ALFAL cannot ignore.

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