

SAUSSURE, GENERAL LINGUISTICS AND GRAMMATICOGRAPHY.
SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE EARLY LUSO-HISPANIC RECEPTION
OF SAUSSUREAN IDEAS

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ABSTRACT:

This paper, following up on Bechara's (2015) pioneering study, is a contribution to the study of the reception of Saussure's ideas in the field of grammar writing, or grammaticography. After discussing the preliminary conditions for a study of the reception of Saussure's conceptions, especially as to their relevance for grammar writing, the paper focuses on two cases of early reception in the Luso-Hispanic world. Following Bechara (2015), we first take a look at Manuel Said Ali's use of Saussurean concepts in his *Dificuldades da lingua portuguesa* (second edition of 1919) and *Grammatica historica da lingua portuguesa* (1921, and second edition, 1931). The second case examined is that of the Catalan author Aragó i Turón, who was the first to present Saussure's ideas to scholars and intellectuals in Spain. A brief comparative assessment is offered as a conclusion.

KEYWORDS:

diachronic linguistics; general linguistics; grammaticography; linguistic theory; Saussurean linguistics; sign (linguistic –); synchronic linguistics; Ricard Aragó i Turón; Manuel Said Ali; Ferdinand de Saussure

Introduction

The present contribution, in honour of Prof. Evanildo Bechara, takes up the issue of the early reception¹ of Ferdinand de Saussure's general linguistics. In his thought-provoking paper² "Primeiros ecos de F. de Saussure na grammatografia de língua portuguesa", Evanildo Bechara has pointed to the first traces of the reception of Saussure's thoughts on general linguistics in (Brazilian Portuguese) *grammaticography*. This is a topic which has hardly received attention in linguistic historiography, given that the reception of Saussurean general linguistics has almost exclusively been studied from the point of view of its being reflected in, and having impacted upon, linguistic theory, i.e. in works belonging to what is either called "general linguistics", "theory of language", or "theoretical linguistics"³. The issue of Saussure's reception in works presented as 'grammars' (either synchronic or diachronic grammars) is one that deserves a comprehensive investigation.

1. Defining the research topic

The topic of Saussure's influence on conceptions concerning grammar and grammar-writing (grammaticography) is in several respects a fascinating one. In the first place, there is the question of the 'transmission channels' and their chronology: through which authors, and through which (type of) works did the ideas put forward in the *Cours de linguistique générale* penetrate into the textual 'genre' of (descriptive and historical) grammars, and did this occur

¹ The reception of Saussure's general linguistics is a vast research topic, given the geographical (and chronological) extension and the theoretical diversity of lines of reception of Saussure's ideas. A comprehensive investigation of this topic would require international cooperation worldwide, covering the fields of linguistics, semiotics, philosophy of language, etc. To gain an idea of the complexity of the task, one may consult the *Bibliographia saussureana* (Koerner 1972) and the various installments of Rudolf Engler's "Bibliographie saussurienne" (Engler 1976-1989) in the *Cahiers Ferdinand de Saussure*.

² The text was first presented at the 4th 'Congresso Internacional de Língua Galego-Portuguesa: Em homenagem a Ferdinand de Saussure', which was held at the university of Vigo from October 28 till November 1st, 1993. It was included as "Apresentação" in the seventh edition of M. Said Ali's *Dificuldades da língua portuguesa* (see Bechara 2008), and republished in *Confluência* in 2015 (Bechara 2015). I will quote from the last published version.

³ See especially the comprehensive study by Koerner (1973).

around the same time in different national traditions⁴, and was the early reception of these ideas the start of a continuous line of impact, or are we faced with discontinuous traces of influence? Addressing this question will require a thoroughly documented epihistoriographical study (preferably limited to the grammatical description of a single language), and will involve accurate and meticulous bibliographical research on grammars and grammatical descriptions, and prosopographical research on authors⁵, and, of course, a close inspection of their indebtedness to Saussurean ideas.

A second major question is that of the theoretical ‘incidence’ of the influence of Saussurean ideas, and of the momentum of their impact. Among the ideas put forward in the *CLG*⁶, which ones had the most important, or weighty, role in the reception by authors of grammars or scholars interested in grammaticography? Various possible points of theoretical incidence can be mentioned here⁷: the distinction between synchronic and diachronic linguistics (entailing the distinction between system-focused and value-bound vs. fact-focused organization of the materials to be dealt with); the adoption of the linguistic sign as the central unit of description (which may have led to a bipartition between the description of the *signifiant*-side and the analysis of the *signifié*-side of linguistic entities); the distinction between the two major organizational axes of linguistic structure, viz. the associative (or ‘paradigmatic’) and the syntagmatic axes; the dichotomy between *langue* and *parole* (possibly involving the decision to distinguish between a grammar of the *langue* and a grammar of the *parole*, the latter subsuming syntax and stylistics). The study of this second question will require thorough familiarity with national traditions of grammaticography, with models

⁴ We may safely assume that the earliest reception took place in the French and Francophone tradition, and subsequently in other Romance traditions.

⁵ I.e. on their theoretical and socio-professional profile, on their background, on their research interests, their linguistic-didactic involvement, etc.

⁶ In the following I will use the abbreviation *CLG* for Saussure’s *Cours de linguistique générale*. In view of the fact that the two cases of early reception analysed here (in sections 3 and 4) have to be related to the first edition (1916) of the *CLG*, the mention “*CLG*” should be taken to refer to the bibliographical item “Saussure 1916”.

⁷ Although this issue calls for a thorough systematic investigation, I want to highlight its relevance: if we compare, e.g., the early reception of Saussure’s ideas in the ‘genre’ of French grammaticography, we notice that French grammarians, such as Damourette and Pichon, or Galichet (see *infra*), were mostly interested in Saussure’s concept of language system, in his theory of the linguistic sign, and in the concept of *valeur*, whereas the Dutch linguist Cornelis de Boer, author of a work on French syntax (De Boer 1947), focused on the Saussurean dichotomies of synchrony vs. diachrony, and *langue* vs. *parole*.

of grammatical description, and with techniques and principles of descriptive linguistics, especially with reference to the period 1900–1950. Fortunately, in this field we have at our disposal a model-study, viz. Peter Lauwers’ thoroughly documented and ground-breaking study of the tensions between traditional(ist) grammaticography and the first “breakthrough” of general linguistics in the field of French language studies (Lauwers 2004). As shown by Lauwers, influence of Saussure’s ideas on authors of French grammars is only visible, and then only to a slight degree, from the 1930s on⁸. In 1930, Jacques Damourette and Édouard Pichon, in the first volume of their monumental grammar *Des Mots à la Pensée* (Damourette – Pichon 1930–1956), refer to Saussure. However, their early reception of Saussure’s ideas is quite ambiguous: on the one hand, while they endorse the idea of language as a *system*, they clearly view it not so much as a system of values, but rather as a system of lingually expressed ideas (*système de pensée* or *système taxiématique*). Also, while these two authors seem to accept the theoretical distinction between a synchronic and a diachronic approach, in their actual practice, they do not operate with this distinction, and in fact adopt the idea of a linguistic-psychological unity of the French language since its first attestations up to the 20th century! Adopting a ‘mentalist’ and ‘psychologistic’ view on language (both *langue* and *langage*), the authors ultimately reject Saussure’s thesis of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign⁹. A brief mention of Saussure’s sign theory (also interpreted in a mentalist and

⁸ Cf. Lauwers (2004: 643): “Vers 1930, les idées de Saussure et de l’École de Prague commencent à être diffusées en France. Les données du corpus montrent que les conceptions linguistiques de Saussure ont eu peu d’écho avant les années 30”; and see also Lauwers (2004: 644): “Le fait que le *CLG* soit cité [in the grammar of the two Le Bidois] d’après la 3^e édition (celle de 1931), tout comme dans les autres grammaires où figure le nom de Saussure, souligne le peu d’influence directe qu’a eu de Saussure avant 1930”. As also noted by Lauwers (quoting Chervel 1995: 40), it is remarkable that in official documents concerning the education of teachers of primary schools and ‘*écoles normales*’ Saussure’s ideas and those of the Prague school seem to have left their traces already by 1930, i.e. before their reception in French universities!

⁹ See Damourette – Pichon (1930–1956: volume VI, 9-11, 95-97). See Lauwers (2004: 647): “Comme la langue n’est pas (conçue comme) autonome par rapport à la pensée (la langue est enracinée dans la pensée qu’elle structure), il leur [= Damourette & Pichon] est impossible d’accepter le caractère non motivé, arbitraire du signe saussurien (VI, 10; VI, 95-97); le langage est trop important comme principe structurant de la pensée – issu aussi de l’évolution naturelle de la pensée – pour être abaissé à une branche de la sémiologie (VI, 10). Pour ce qui est du signifiant, il faut souligner que dès 1927 (publication: 1930) ils parlent d’individus phonétiques – par opposition aux phonèmes (= sons) –, en renvoyant à Saussure (VI, 166), qui, lui, les avait appelés espèces phonétiques (VI, 166)”.

psychologicistic way) can also be found in the second volume of the *Syntaxe du français moderne* (1935–38) of Georges and Robert Le Bidois. But we have to wait until 1947 for a more integrated ‘recuperation’ of Saussure’s ideas in French grammaticography. This occurred in Georges Galichet’s *Essai de grammaire psychologique* (1947). Although here again Saussure’s ideas were adopted in a psychologicistic key (cf. Galichet 1947: VIII), Galichet’s merit is to have integrated notions such as ‘system (of the language)’ and ‘arbitrariness (of the linguistic sign)’ within a functionalist view of grammar. But when Galichet refers to the non-perceptible status of linguistic entities, thus seemingly endorsing Saussure’s ideas, he in fact distorts Saussure’s view on the differential nature of the linguistic sign, and replaces it with a dualistic view on abstract thought vs. linguistic expression (cf. Lauwers 2004: 649).

A third important question to be addressed when faced with the problem of studying the reception of Saussure’s ideas in (traditions of) grammaticography relates to two basic aspects, viz. (a) whether the contextual conditions were appropriate for the *CLG* to enjoy an early reception, and (b) whether the *CLG* contained ideas that could have been sufficiently inspiring or engaging for authors of grammatical works or scholars interested in grammar writing. I will briefly address these two aspects.

- The contextual conditions

The *CLG* appeared in May 1916¹⁰, in the midst of World War I. The diffusion of the *CLG*, published by Payot (in Lausanne), was not only hampered by the difficult political and economic situation in Europe at the time; in addition, Germany and Austria refused to import books published by Payot, because the publishing house had issued in 1915 a radically anti-German publication. This fact explains the paucity of reviews of the *CLG* in German linguistic and philological journals¹¹. It may also provide the explanation for the fact that German

¹⁰ Officially, the book was released on May 16, 1916 (see Sofia – Swiggers, to appear).

¹¹ The first edition of the *CLG* was reviewed in two German philological journals: the *Literaturblatt für germanische und romanische Philologie* (1917, review by Hugo Schuchardt), and the *Jahresbericht über die Erscheinungen auf dem Gebiete der germanischen Philologie* (1919, unsigned book notice, to be ascribed to the editors Franz Hartmann and Gotthold Boetticher). Two other, extensive reviews written in German appeared in 1916 in Swiss-German newspapers: *Sonntagsblatt der Bund* (1916, review by Karl Jaberg), and *Sonntagsblatt der Basler Nachrichten* (1916, by Jacob Wackernagel). A shorter presentation, by Max Niedermann, appeared in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* in August 1916. A collection of the reviews of (the various editions of) the *CLG*, with translation into French for the reviews originally published in another language is being prepared for publication by Estanislao Sofia and myself.

linguistic scholars took a long time to engage in a critical discussion of the ideas of the *CLG*. A notable exception was Hugo Schuchardt, a native German who spent most of his active life in Graz, and who ranks among the prominent linguists of the late 19th and early 20th century. Schuchardt wrote a detailed review of the *CLG*, and submitted Saussure's ideas to a critical examination¹².

Also, apart from France and French-speaking Switzerland, the reception of the *CLG* in the Romance-speaking countries was limited¹³. This may have felt frustrating for the two main editors of the *CLG*, Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, and it may explain why one of them, viz. Sechehaye, took the initiative of writing a detailed exposition of Saussure's ideas (see Sechehaye 1917)¹⁴.

- The place of grammar within Saussure's lectures on general linguistics

From the outset it must be stated that grammar did not have a central place in Saussure's discussion of linguistics. This is, at least, the impression one gets when looking at the posthumously published 1916 edition, prepared by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, with the help of Albert Riedlinger. The passages where Saussure deals with grammar are not very numerous.

In the chapter "La grammaire et ses subdivisions", Saussure deals explicitly with the concept of grammar, which he defines in a larger sense:

"La linguistique statique ou description d'un état de langue peut être appelée *grammaire*, dans le sens très précis, et d'ailleurs usuel, qu'on trouve dans les

¹² Schuchardt's review, is together with that of Karl Jaberg, one of the very few in which the principles of Saussure's general linguistics are discussed with insight (cf. Swiggers 2016b: 267).

¹³ The *CLG* was presented to Switzerland's French-speaking readership in various newspapers: *La Semaine littéraire* (May 1916, by André Oltramare), *Journal de Genève* (June 1916, by Jules Ronjat), and *Gazette de Lausanne* (August 1916, by Léopold Gautier). On the Swiss-German reception, see note 11. For France, special mention must be made of the reviews by Saussure's former students Antoine Meillet (*Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris*, 1916 and *Revue critique d'histoire et de littérature*, 1917) and Maurice Grammont (*Revue des Langues romanes*, 1917). All these reviews and book presentations will be included in the collection of reviews mentioned in note 11.

¹⁴ Sechehaye's text was translated into Spanish; this translation appeared in an educational journal ("Los problemas de la lengua a la luz de una teoría nueva", *Boletín de la institución libre de enseñanza* 50, 1926, pp. 343-349; 51, 1927, pp. 19-24 and 42-48). This presentation of Saussure's ideas does not seem to have exerted much influence on Spanish linguists at that time. Concerning the influence of Saussure on Sechehaye's work in the field of general linguistics and grammar writing, see Frýba-Reber (1994).

expressions “grammaire du jeu d’échec”, “grammaire de la Bourse”, etc., où il s’agit d’un objet complexe et systématique, mettant en jeu des valeurs coexistantes.

La grammaire étudie la langue en tant que système de moyens d’expression; qui dit grammatical dit synchronique et significatif, et comme aucun système n’est à cheval sur plusieurs époques à la fois, il n’y a pas pour nous de “grammaire historique”; ce qu’on appelle ainsi n’est en réalité que la linguistique diachronique” (Saussure 1916: 185).

As appears from this passage, Saussure directly relates grammar to the description of a system, and considers inadequate the use of the term ‘historical grammar’. However, the rejection is not a radical one, as we can see in the third part of the *CLG*, dealing with “diachronic linguistics”. There, Saussure reverts to the concept of grammar, and raises the question whether there is “a history of grammar”, and what it would comprise. He gives no definite answer to the question, but seems to imply that there is an ‘historical line of grammar’ (i.e. of grammatical systems, comprising the non-phonetic side of language evolution):

“Si donc la phonétique intervient le plus souvent par un côté quelconque dans l’évolution, elle ne peut l’expliquer tout entière; le facteur phonétique une fois éliminé, on trouve un résidu qui semble justifier l’idée “d’une histoire de la grammaire”; c’est là qu’est la véritable difficulté; la distinction – qui doit être maintenue – entre le diachronique et le synchronique demanderait des explications délicates, incompatibles avec le cadre de ce cours” (Saussure 1916: 196-197).

Given that Saussure, in his cursory view of the history of language studies at the beginning of the *CLG*, also speaks about grammar, viz. as the traditional normative discipline, influenced by logic, and leading to the trend of general grammar, we have to conclude that Saussure’s concept of grammar was a complex one, since it included traditional grammar (as practiced in school), theoretically slanted grammar (‘philosophical’ or ‘general’ grammar)¹⁵, grammar

¹⁵ It should be recalled that the trend of general grammar explicitly took up the notion of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, and thus exerted direct influence on Saussure, who was familiar with the doctrine of the *grammaire générale* (see Joseph 2012: 80, 144).

as the study of the use of language forms¹⁶, and grammar as an integral part of ‘static linguistics’¹⁷. The tasks of ‘static linguistics’ were defined by Saussure in his second series of lectures on general linguistics of the academic year 1908–1909, especially in January 1909. On January 19, 1909, Saussure had a meeting with Albert Riedlinger in which he discussed the contents of static linguistics (cf. Joseph 2012: 552).

2. A first general look at Saussure’s reception in the Luso-Hispanic world

In his “Panorama de la lingüística iberoamericana” (Coseriu 1977)¹⁸, Eugenio Coseriu pointed out, next to the important role of Amado Alonso’s Spanish translation of the *CLG* (Coseriu [1968] 1977: 118), the overall familiarity of Ibero-American linguists with the ideas of Saussure and of other European linguists:

“[...] el nivel general de la información lingüística ha aumentado considerablemente en Iberoamérica, en particular en algunos países, como la Argentina y el Brasil, y muy particularmente entre los lingüistas jóvenes, a menudo mejor informados que los más viejos. Los primeros resultados de ello son, en parte, tangibles: nombres como los de Vendryes, Saussure, Vossler, Spitzer, Bally, Bühler son de dominio común entre los lingüistas iberoamericanos y suelen pertenecer a las listas de lecturas en las universidades en las que se enseña la lingüística – además, naturalmente, de los principales lingüistas españoles (y, en el Brasil, portugueses) –, y a esos nombres, por lo menos en un segundo plano, se agregan otros, como los de: Humboldt, Meillet, Sapir, Trubetzkoy, Wartburg y algún otro” (Coseriu [1968] 1977: 306; see also p. 363).

¹⁶ This is the concept of grammar expounded by Saussure in a class of December 21, 1908, where at the close of the lecture Saussure pointed out that grammar is concerned with the functions of language forms, and morphology with their states; see Joseph (2012: 546-547) for a discussion of this idea.

¹⁷ Saussure viewed ‘grammar’ as confined to the synchronic approach of language; properly speaking, there could not be any ‘historical grammar’, since systems are limited to (and defined by) well-determined periods.

¹⁸ First published in English as Coseriu (1968).

However, the depth and locus of influence of Saussure's ideas in the writings and teaching of Ibero-American linguists is a research topic that needs to be investigated in close detail. In the light of this desideratum, Evanildo Bechara's (2008/2015) text serves as a good starting point for addressing the topic, with respect to the situation in Brazil.

3. Saussurean echoes in the writings of Manuel Said Ali

Evanildo Bechara's paper has brought to light an early reference to, and use of Saussure's ideas in the writings of a prominent Brazilian scholar of Romance linguistics, Said Ali. It should perhaps be pointed out that Manuel Said Ali Ida (1861–1953) had European roots, being the son of a Turkish father and a German mother. After a career as a teacher of several modern European languages – German¹⁹, French and English –, he embarked upon a career as a linguist, grammarian and philologist, focusing on the historical grammar²⁰ and language history²¹ of Portuguese, as well as on the (didactic) grammaticography²² of the Portuguese language. During his long life, he combined his linguistic (and literary) interests with an interest in natural sciences, such as geography²³, botany and entomology. Interestingly, Said Ali, in the second edition of his *Dificuldades da língua portuguesa*²⁴, which appeared in 1919, pointed out the

¹⁹ In 1894 he published a learner's grammar of German (*Nova Grammatica Alleman*).

²⁰ Said Ali's approach in his historical grammar of Portuguese is guided by the crucial distinction between the lexico-semantic study of words, and the study of formative processes (ranging from word formation to syntax). This explains the bipartition of his *Grammatica historica* into two parts: "Lexeologia" on the one hand (this part includes basic information on historical phonetics, but essentially deals with word classes), and "Formação de palavras e syntaxe", on the other. In fact, Said Ali takes "lexeologia" as the study of words in their categorematic and semantic aspects (cf. Said Ali 1921: Prologo, reprinted in the second edition of 1931).

²¹ In his linguistic and philological works, Manuel Said Ali divides the history of the Portuguese language into two major periods: the period of ancient Portuguese, and that of modern Portuguese (cf. *infra*, note 27).

²² Said Ali is the author of a *Grammatica elementar da língua portuguesa* (1923a) and of a *Grammatica secundária da língua portuguesa* (1923b).

²³ In 1905 he published a *Compêndio de geografia elementar*.

²⁴ Modern orthography: *Dificuldades da língua portuguesa*. It should be pointed out that *Dificuldades da língua portuguesa/língua portuguesa* is not a 'puristic' and prescriptive work: the book has a grammatical (and partly stylistic) focus and is based on knowledge about the history of the Portuguese language. The book contains studies on the position of personal pronouns, on the inflected infinitive (*infinitivo pessoal*), on the pronoun *se*, on *haver* and *ter*, on the use of the future, etc. The first edition of *Dificuldades* appeared in 1908.

relevance of Saussure's distinction between synchrony and diachrony²⁵. Also, Said Ali stressed the novelty of the dichotomy, and of its terminology, which must have been an eye-opener for linguists raised and trained in a scholarly context dominated by philological work and historical-comparative linguistics. As rightly pointed out by Bechara, Said Ali immediately realized the methodological and science-pedagogical consequences of the dichotomy:

“Das distinções primárias estabelecidas por Saussure (sincronia e diacronia; língua e fala²⁶), a primeira parece que foi a inicial nas preocupações do mestre e a que oferecia maior possibilidade de operacionalização imediata em livro destinado a descrever o idioma com objetivos pedagógicos, já que, por meio dela, se fugia à metodologia praticada na época, de considerar a língua cavalgando em dois domínios, o dos estados e o das sucessões. Colocando-se o investigador dentro da perspectiva diacrônica, como bem procedera Saussure, “ce n'est plus la langue qu'il aperçoit, mais une série d'événements qui la modifient [Saussure 1916: 129]” (Bechara 2015: 11).

In conformity with Saussure's concept of synchrony, as the (description of the) systemic language-state (*état de langue*) during a particular period, Said Ali applies to the history of the Portuguese language a periodization scheme,

²⁵ “Nesses fatos encontraria F. de Saussure, creio eu, matéria bastante com que reforçar as suas luminosas apreciações sobre linguística sincrônica e linguística diacrônica” (Said Ali [1919 =] 2008: XII).

²⁶ On Said Ali's restricted exploitation of Saussure's dichotomy between *langue* and *parole*, see Bechara (2015: 14): “Embora a natureza prática e pedagógica do livro de Said Ali [= 1937] não enfrentasse a oposição *língua e fala*, não passou despercebida a lição saussuriana de que é na fala “que se trouve le germe de tous les changements: chacun d'eux est lancé d'abord par un certain nombre d'individus avant d'entrer dans l'usage (...) Mais toutes les innovations de la parole n'ont pas le même succès, et tant qu'elles demeurent individuelles, il n'y a pas à en tenir compte, puisque nous étudions la langue; elles ne rentrent dans notre champ d'observation qu'au moment où la collectivité les a accueillies” ([Saussure]1916: pág. 138). Eis como Said Ali se expressa a respeito: “Surge a inovação, formulada acaso por um ou poucos indivíduos; se tem a dita de agradar, não tarda a generalizar-se o seu uso no falar do povo. A gente culta e de fina casta repele-se, a princípio, mas com o tempo sucumbe ao contágio. Imita o vulgo, se não escrevendo com meditação, em todo o caso no trato familiar e falando espontaneamente. Decorrem muitos anos, até que por fim a linguagem literária, não vendo razão para enjeitar o que todo o mundo diz, se decide também a aceitar a mudança” ([Said Ali] 1937, pág. IV)” (Bechara 2015: 14).

which is reduced to two periods: Old Portuguese and Modern Portuguese²⁷. His ‘historical grammar’ of Portuguese is, then, the description of these two large synchronies.

4. The early reception of Saussure in Spain

Already in 1921 the ideas contained in Saussure’s Geneva lectures were presented²⁸ to scholars and intellectuals in Spain. Interestingly, this happened in a work written not by a university professor, nor a language theorist or professional grammarian, but by an enlightened clergyman interested in both language policy and linguistic correction, and in general issues involving language, culture and society. This author was the priest Ricard Aragó i Turón (1883–1963), who wrote extensively about topics of linguistic normalization and purification, as well as on the use of language in the Church (*La lengua de l’Esglesia*), and about the (history of the) Catalan language. Aragó i Turón, who in 1903 founded the *Lliga del Bon Mot*, often wrote under the pseudonym Ivon l’Escop, and it is precisely in one of his books published under this pseudonym that he made known Saussure’s conceptions to the Spanish-speaking and -reading public. The book is titled *La Paraula*, and was published in 1921²⁹; it testifies to Aragó i Turón’s familiarity with the linguistic *episteme* of

²⁷ See Said Ali (1931: IV): “Distingo no portuguez historico dous periodos principaes: o portuguez antigo, que se escreveu até os primeiros annos do seculo XVI, e o portuguez moderno. A esta segunda phase pertencem já a Chronica de Clarimundo (1520), de João de Barros, as obras de Sá de Miranda, escriptas entre 1526 e 1558, as de Antonio Ferreira, a chronica de Palmeirim de Inglaterra e outros trabalhos produzidos por meados do seculo. Robustecida e enriquecida de expressões novas a linguagem usada nas chronicas desta epoca, que relatam os descobrimentos em Africa e Asia e os feitos das armas lusitanas no Oriente, culmina o apuro e gosto do portuguez moderno nos *Lusiadas* (1572). É o seculo da Renascença literaria, e tudo quanto ao depois se escreve é a continuação da linguagem desse periodo”.

²⁸ Mollfulleda (1983: 245) notes: “En la *Revista de Filología Española* se encuentra la primera alusión al *Cours* en 1917, pero es sólo una cita bibliográfica y no vuelve a tratarse de él hasta el año 1922, con motivo de la aparición de la recopilación de las publicaciones científicas de Saussure, en Heidelberg, en 1922, un año, por tanto, después de la publicación de Aragó. Puede también citarse como una de las primeras exposiciones de las teorías de Saussure en España un ciclo de conferencias sobre fonética realizado por P. Fabra en Barcelona, en 1933, y del que tenemos constancia por un raro manuscrito – se trata en realidad, de unos apuntes de clase – que editó en facsímil el Colegio de Arquitectos de Barcelona”.

²⁹ The book was published with official permission of a censor (Dr. Francisco Faura) and of the bishop of Barcelona.

the late 19th and early 20th century. Among the (numerous) quotations of, and references to linguistic literature we find the names of Bréal³⁰, A. Darmesteter, Meillet, and Vossler, not to mention various prominent Catalan authors (such as Alcover or Griera). In the second chapter³¹ of *La Paraula*, Aragó i Turón extensively quotes³² from the *CLG*, in its first edition (1916). In fact, this chapter can be viewed as offering a condensed (albeit selective) account of several main themes³³ of Saussure's general linguistics: the distinction between *langue* and *parole*; the definition of language as a system of terms defined by mutual oppositions, which establish the 'value' of each of them; the theory of the linguistic sign (involving the distinction between *signifiant* and *signifié*, the concept of linguistic arbitrariness, the immutability of the sign). Also, Aragó i Turón presents a summary of Saussure's theory of language change. It should be noted that the author often proceeds by assembling passages from Saussure, which are either translated, or paraphrased, or quoted and also translated. In

³⁰ Bréal is also explicitly mentioned by Said Ali in his *Dificuldades da lingua portuguesa/língua portuguesa*: "Não é só em português que tais alterações se produzem; as de sintaxe, como de qualquer outro gênero, são inerentes ao próprio fenômeno da linguagem. Leia-se o que Bréal, no seu excelente livro *Sémantique*, escreve sobre as aquisições novas e sobre as formas superabundantes produzidas pelo mecanismo gramatical" (quoted after Said Ali 2008: 18).

³¹ The book has three chapters: "La paraula en l'Esriptura, en la Gramática i en les Acadèmies"; "La paraula en la llengua", and "La paraula a Catalunya". The third chapter can be read as a 20th-century 'defense and illustration' of the Catalan language; cf. Aragó i Turón (1921: 266-267): "La llengua catalana ha entrat en un moment de plenitud. La *unificació* de la llengua i la seva *fixació* es van obtenir, entre altres col·laboracions, mercès a la secció de Filologia de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans [...] I la seva *depuració* i *glorificació*, l'ennobliment integral de l'idioma, aixecat al rang d'instrument essencial de la Cultura, es va obtenir, mercès a la Lliga del Bon Mot, en la farga viva de tot idioma: els llavis del poble".

³² In fact, the first quote from the *CLG* is given on p. 17, in a list of quotations at the beginning of the first chapter (the quotation concerns Saussure's statement about the relationship between writing and language stability or change). Within the first chapter, the first 'integrated' citations from Saussure are on pp. 53-54; they relate to Saussure's appraisal of traditional grammar: "La grammaire traditionnelle ignore des parties entières de la langue, telles que la formation des mots; elle est normative et croit devoir édicter des règles au lieu de constater des faits; les vues d'ensemble lui font défaut; souvent même elle ne sait pas distinguer le mot écrit du mot parlé" (*CLG*, p. 121); "Les divisions traditionnelles de la grammaire peuvent avoir leur utilité pratique, mais ne correspondent pas à des distinctions naturelles et ne sont unies par aucun lien logique" (*CLG*, p. 193).

³³ Aragó i Turón also takes up the comparison between language and chess; on this comparison, see Swiggers (2016a).

the section on the arbitrariness and immutability of the linguistic sign, Aragó i Turón (1921: 158-162) has selected the following passages:

“Non seulement un individu serait incapable, s’il le voulait, de modifier en quoi que ce soit le choix qui a été fait, mais la masse elle-même ne peut exercer sa souveraineté sur un seul mot; elle est liée à la langue telle qu’elle est” (Saussure 1916: 106);

“L’acte par lequel, à un moment donné, les noms seraient distribués aux choses, par lequel un contrat serait passé entre les concepts et les images acoustiques – cet acte, nous pouvons le concevoir, mais il n’a jamais été constaté” (Saussure 1916: 107);

“Un état de langue donné est toujours le produit de facteurs historiques, et ce sont ces facteurs qui expliquent pourquoi le signe est immuable, c’est-à-dire résiste à toute substitution arbitraire” (Saussure 1916: 107);

“Tout ce que le temps a fait, le temps peut le défaire ou le transformer” (Saussure 1916: 322);

“Le temps altère toutes choses; il n’y a pas de raison pour que la langue échappe à cette loi universelle” (Saussure 1916: 114).

It should be remarked that Aragó i Turón does not make any explicit statement about Saussure’s theory as a comprehensive doctrine. Neither does he engage in a discussion of linguistics³⁴ (or general linguistics), although he adheres to Saussure’s view of a *linguistique de la langue*, which hinges on the definition of language as a (formal) system. We can refer here to passages dealing with language as a form rather than a substance, and on language as displaying a proper organization (cf. Aragó i Turón 1921: 132-133), as well as to passages about language as a system of values (cf. Aragó i Turón 1921: 138-139).

³⁴ In fact, Aragó i Turón, in dealing with the (formal) study of language, prefers the term *gramàtic* (‘grammar’); see especially chapter 2 of his book.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the two cases of early reception of Saussure in Brazil and Spain call for a brief comparative assessment. A first fact to be noted is that both precede by several years the publication of the first Portuguese and Spanish translations of the *CLG*³⁵. A second fact to be noted is the divergence of the respective profiles of the authors: whereas Manuel Said Ali was an academic scholar and a philologist, Aragó i Turón was an amateur scholar, though acquainted with some relevant publications in the field of (Romance) linguistics³⁶. However, to some extent their publishing strategies coincide, since both scholars shared an overall educational concern; in the case of Said Ali, this concern was a specifically linguistic-didactic one, addressing an audience of scholars, students and intellectuals interested in the history of the Portuguese language and in the grammar and stylistics of contemporary (Brazilian) Portuguese. Aragó i Turón, on the other hand, had a broader ‘proselytic’ aim, viz. the purification and promotion of the Catalan language, as well as the propagation of a general concern with proper language use.

Finally, in their reception of Saussure’s ideas the two authors take different stands. Said Ali focuses on the distinction between synchrony and diachrony, and on the correlative distinction between a systemic language state vs. the succession of periods in the history of a language. Aragó i Turón, on the other hand, although he presents an account of the central themes of the *CLG*, seems specifically interested in Saussure’s view of a *langue* as having a proper organization, defined by the value relationships between the elements that compose the whole.

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³⁵ The first Spanish translation of the *CLG*, by Amado Alonso, appeared in 1945 (= Saussure 1945). A Brazilian-Portuguese translation of the *CLG*, by A. Chelini, J.P. Paes and I. Blikstein, appeared in 1970 (= Saussure 1970); in Portugal, a Portuguese translation by J.V. Adragão appeared in 1971 (= Saussure 1971).

³⁶ See *supra*, section 4. However, one notes that he misquotes the name of Meyer-Lübke as “Meye-Lücke” on the two occasions where he refers to the latter’s introduction to Romance linguistics.

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Nota do editor: articulista convidado. Excepcionalmente, mantiveram-se as referências bibliográficas originais.