

Gomes de Matos, Francisco. *Comunicar para o bem: rumo à paz comunicativa*. São Paulo: Editora Ave-Maria, 2002. 117p. ISBN: 85-276-0563-5

The most recent book of the Brazilian linguist Francisco Gomes de Matos, *Comunicar para o bem* (Communicating for the Good), is a new step in the development of linguistic theory. At the same time that it is a linguistic analysis due to its emphasis on language, it is an interdisciplinary work, intertwining Philosophy, Psychology and Social Sciences.

Within Linguistics it deals with Applied Linguistics and Pragmatics--how to use language in a practical sense. Immediately, J. L. Austin's book *How to Do Things with Words* (1962, 2nd ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U P, 1975), comes to ones mind. "Philosophers have long been interested in the word 'good' and, quite recently, have begun to take the line of considering how to use it, what we use it to do." (163) In his book, Austin outlines a possible application of a kind of general theory of Speech Acts, distinguishing three main ones: the *locutionary act*, which is "to utter[ing] a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference; . . . the *illocutionary act* such as informing, ordering, warning . . . utterances which have a certain (conventional) force; . . . and *perlocutionary acts*, what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading . . ., and even, say, surprising or misleading" (109).

Gomes de Matos, without referring to Austin, integrates these acts into his book, going a step further by creating a philosophy, a theory, and a method of "how to do things with words."

The author's philosophy is based on the concept of *communicative peace*. This concept was proposed to the Committee of Sociolinguistic Research at the International Sociological Association (Sociolinguistics Newsletter 7, July 1992 and to the Language Education Profession in "Using Foreign Languages for Communicative Peace," *FILPLV World Newsletter* 25, May 1992). In 1993, the linguist Dell Hymes, who created the concept *communicative competence*, writes a letter supporting Gomes de Matos' concept: "So far as I know you are the first person to connect the communicative dimension directly with the notion of peace (letter to the author, 09/30/1993).

Gomes de Matos starts his book with an invitation to the reader: "Sejamos comunicativamente prudentes, piedosos e pacíficos. Usemos uma boa linguagem. Comuniquemos bem, comunicando-nos para o bem" (Let's be communicatively prudent, pious and non-aggressive. Let's use good language. Let's communicate well, communicating for the good). One should always be careful when using words, it doesn't matter where nor in what context, nor if addressing somebody at home or speaking to the highest authority. Being careful is a way of being kind and compassionate and above all a Christian and a humane human being.

Gomes de Matos develops his theory in five chapters. In Chapter 1, "Comunicar para o bem," the author presents in short and objective texts, principles on building friendship, strategies of conversation, and on how to be human and polite. His arguments follow a sequence and have a didactic proposition. He mentions how schools should prepare students preventing them from being aggressive and offensive by using positive statements. He tries to make the reader conscious on how words are misused and become insulting, without the utterer being conscious of his usage.

In Chapter 2, “Direitos e deveres,” Gomes de Matos touches the core of his research: rights and obligations. He mentions several authors who indirectly have made tentative approaches to this theme. Interestingly, the embryo to what the author would later refer to as “Linguística da Paz” (Peace Linguistics) can be found in the “Posfácio” of Joaquim Mattoso Câmara Junior’s *Dicionário de linguística e gramática* (1977). This in an entry on “Linguística humana”, the author asks, “De que modo os falantes podem humanizar-se ainda mais linguisticamente?” (How can the speakers humanize themselves more linguistically?). In this chapter, Gomes de Matos also enters in details on how to use appropriate sounds (phonetics-phonology), on how to choose the right words and their meaning (semantics-lexicon), and on how to put this selection in an adequate combination in the sentence (syntax).

Once mastered, the linguistic principles, Chapter 3, “Cidadania, educação e trabalho,” suggests teaching how to integrate the individual into different contexts in his daily life. He develops the topic of a humanizing pedagogy, of ethics in the environment, and of giving every person his/her due value in any organization.

Chapter 4, “Cristianismo e paz,” emphasizes the duties of every Christian person, and shows how the Bible can teach language. He gives examples of several versions of the Bible in Portuguese, some with formal, others with semi-formal style, according to the kind of reader that particular Bible is directed to.

This leads us to the communication in the twenty-first century. Chapter 5, “Percepções humanizadoras,” suggests a method for achieving a positive and humane communication for peace. Gomes de Matos calls his technique TRELI (“tríplice repetição de uma letra inicial numa frase começada por uma forma verbal”). In English it is called THRIL, threefold repetition of an initial letter. It is a mnemonic device in which a triple repetition of the initial letter in a phrase begun by a verb form is used. For ex. **PPP** (“**P**ense **P**rimero em seu **P**róximo”--think first about the other person), **CCC** (“**C**rie um **C**lima **C**onstrutivo”--create a constructive atmosphere), or **DDD** (“**D**ialogue para **D**esenvolver sua **D**ignidade”--use the dialogue to develop your dignity) (94). In **CCC**, for example, it would be taught how to make the receiver of your message feel at ease in a conversation by smiling and showing that you are glad to be with him/her. This technique is a traditional mnemonic device to improve the capacity to memorize and retain information. TRELI offers the challenge of how: 1) to translate an idea in a concise form, 2) to find three words with the same initial for the formulation of an idea or principle, and 3) to find the maximum examples possible to develop the theory, and consequently the proposed communicative peace.

Gomes de Matos’ philosophy and method is PC--politically correct. It is an attitude and a way of life. It teaches how to be positive and not offensive or destructive. But being politically correct has been overemphasized and is even ridiculed in such a way that even an Anti-Politically Correct Brown Ribbon Campaign has been created. Gomes de Matos’ plan is to start with a positive language so that one doesn’t have to undo social misunderstandings. It might be a harmonious utopia, like in John Lennon’s lyrics in “Imagine,” but undoubtedly a necessary one in the present century.

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Comunicação do corpo (With Aluizio R. Trinta). São Paulo: Ática, 1990, 4th ed. 2003, 88 pp.

Gestos: uso e significado (co-editor Isabella Poggi). Oporto: Ed. Fernando Pessoa, 2003. 113 pp.

Working Portuguese (With Regina Santos and Marco Silva). Units 1,2 (138 pp.), Unit 3 (73 pp.). Chapel Hill: North Carolina Global Center, 2003.

Comunicação e modernidade: um estudo discursivo (With Joaquim Nepomuceno, Eduardo Neiva, editors). Belém: Universidade Federal do Pará / CLA / ML, 2000, 191 pp.

Mulher, sujeito e objeto da literatura portuguesa. Oporto: Fernando Pessoa U P, 1999, 387 pp.

Comunicação na era pós-moderna (With Eduardo Neiva, editors). Petrópolis: Vozes, 1997, 387 pp.; 2nd ed. 1998.

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