

**SOCIAL HISTORY
AND LINGUISTIC CHANGE:
PRONOMINAL
SUBJECT, VERB
AGREEMENT,
AND LINGUISTIC
CONTACTS***

**HISTÓRIA SOCIAL E MUDANÇA LINGUÍSTICA: SUJEITO PRONOMINAL,
CONCORDÂNCIA VERBAL E CONTATOS LINGUÍSTICOS**

**HISTORIA SOCIAL Y CAMBIO LINGÜÍSTICO: SUJETO PRONOMINAL, CONCORDANCIA
VERBAL Y CONTACTOS LINGÜÍSTICOS**

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ABSTRACT: This article discusses the role of linguistic contact in the shift of the inflectional paradigm and the redefinition of the Null Subject Parameter in Brazilian Portuguese (BP). We revisit the analyses of Oliveira, Soledade, and Santos (2009), Baxter (2009), Avelar and Carneiro (2019), and Baxter, Araújo, and Figueiredo (2019) regarding verbal and nominal agreement in the records of the *Sociedade Protetora dos Desvalidos* (SPD); as well as Almeida and Carneiro (2009) and Pitombo and Almeida (2019) on the null subject issue. Our argument contrasts with Duarte's (2019) perspective, which minimizes the impact of linguistic contact, and aligns with the views of Lucchesi and Baxter (1993, 1997) and Lucchesi (2009), who identify traces of creolization processes in BP's

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morphological simplification. The study highlights the need to consider both structural aspects of the language and sociolinguistic dynamics to understand changes in BP.

KEYWORDS: Linguistic Change. Brazilian Portuguese. Linguistic Contact. Verbal Agreement. Pronominal Subject.

RESUMO: O artigo discute a participação dos contatos linguísticos na mudança do paradigma flexional e na remarcação do Parâmetro do Sujeito Nulo no português brasileiro. Retomamos as análises das atas da Sociedade Protetora dos Desvalidos de Oliveira, Soledade e Santos (2009), Baxter (2009), Avelar e Carneiro (2019) e Baxter, Araujo e Figueiredo (2019) para a concordância verbal e nominal e de Almeida e Carneiro (2009) e Pitombo e Almeida (2019) para a questão do sujeito nulo. Nossa argumentação se contrapõe à visão de Duarte (2019), que minimiza o impacto dos contatos linguísticos, e assume a posição de Lucchesi e Baxter (1993, 1997) e Lucchesi (2009), que indicam traços de processos de crioulização na simplificação morfológica nessa variedade. A pesquisa destaca a necessidade de considerar tanto aspectos estruturais da língua quanto as dinâmicas sociolinguísticas para compreender as mudanças no PB.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Mudança Linguística. Português Brasileiro. Contatos Linguísticos. Concordância Verbal. Sujeito Pronominal

RESUMEN: El artículo discute la participación de los contactos lingüísticos en el cambio del paradigma flexivo y en la reconfiguración del Parámetro del Sujeto Nulo en el portugués brasileño (PB). Retomamos los análisis de Oliveira, Soledade y Santos (2009), Baxter (2009), Avelar y Carneiro (2019) y Baxter, Araujo y Figueiredo (2019) para la CV y CN en las actas de la Sociedad Protectora de los Desvalidos (SPD) y de Almeida y Carneiro (2009) y Pitombo y Almeida (2019) para la cuestión del sujeto nulo. Nuestra argumentación se contrapone a la visión de Duarte (2019), que minimiza el impacto de los contactos lingüísticos, y asume la posición de Lucchesi y Baxter (1993, 1997) y Lucchesi (2009), quienes indican rastros de procesos de criolización en la simplificación morfológica del PB. La investigación destaca la necesidad de considerar tanto los aspectos estructurales de la lengua como las dinámicas sociolingüísticas para comprender los cambios en el PB.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Cambio Lingüístico. Portugués Brasileño. Contactos Lingüísticos. Concordancia Verbal. Sujeto Pronominal.

1 INTRODUCTION

The processes of variation and change in Brazilian Portuguese (BP) have been investigated in various areas of language description and analysis, including sociolinguistics, based on the Principles and Parameters Theory. Many of these studies are interested in the dynamics of linguistic contacts in the formation of BP, highlighting the reduction of the verbal inflectional paradigm and the emergence of pronominal strategies that differ from the European variety. However, some studies differ on the element that caused these changes, especially in relation to their socio-historical contexts. Therefore, there is a need to deepen the empirical analysis of the role of linguistic contacts in the morphological simplification processes of BP.

The hypothesis that language contacts play a role in the reduction of the inflectional paradigm is defended by authors such as Baxter and Lucchesi (1993, 1997) and Lucchesi (2009), among others - among whom we have worked with before (Silva, 2023; Silva; Almeida, 2023; Silva; Araújo, 2023). In contrast, Duarte (2019) qualifies this issue, arguing that the reduction occurred independently of linguistic contacts¹. Thus, this study seeks to contribute to this theoretical dichotomy by revisiting the analyses of verbal agreement (VA) and nominal agreement (NA) in the minutes of the Sociedade Protetora dos Desvalidos² (SPD) (Baxter,

¹ During the evaluation process of this study, Maria Eugénia Lammoglia Duarte delivered a keynote address titled “Two longitudinal studies: the syntax of EP and BP in the production of two contemporary playwrights - Luiz Francisco Rebello (1924–2011) and Millôr Fernandes (1923–2012)” at the *Sociolinguísticas: variação e interfaces*, held at the Federal University of Paraíba (October 13–15, 2025). On that occasion, she remarked on the necessity of revisiting her previous work regarding the social dimension of language change, particularly concerning linguistic contact. In a paper published on August 27, 2025, also during the peer-review period of this study, Duarte (2025) proposes a discussion on the role of language contact and social history in the formation and change of Brazilian Portuguese (BP). This work signals a significant shift in her theoretical framework, emphasizing the socio-historical factors underlying linguistic development. We strongly recommend this reading.

² It is a civil organization of black people in Brazil, founded in 1832.

2009; Oliveira; Soledade; Santos, 2009; Baxter; Araujo; Figueiredo, 2019; Avelar; Carneiro, 2019). It addresses the role of language contact in the reduction of the inflectional paradigm and, consequently, in the change of the Null Subject Parameter (NSP) in Brazilian Portuguese — a topic examined in greater depth in the ongoing thesis. We aim to highlight the limitations of the available historical sources and propose interpretations that consider structural aspects of the language and social and historical dynamics. On the latter, we recommend Silva, Araújo, Santiago (2025), in which we analyze how social and linguistic interactions allow us to understand, in a broader perspective, the dynamics of linguistic variation and change.

2 BETWEEN GRAMMAR AND SOCIO-HISTORY IN THE ANALYSIS OF CHANGE

Duarte's research (1995, 2018) focused on educated urban varieties of BP. This was one of the author's research choices; however, it also reflected a limitation of studies at the time, given the lack of description and sociolinguistic samples of rural communities during the early stages of research on language-in-use in Brazil. In 2019, commenting on the relationship between the "rich" inflectional paradigm and the null pronominal subject, the author takes a position on the hypothesis that linguistic contacts play a role in reducing the verbal endings in BP. This socio-historical element is secondary to the alteration of the NSP in this variety (Duarte, 2019). However, the phenomenon of parametric resetting in BP is syntactic in nature, which makes it one of the most challenging areas in determining the actual influence of language contact on this grammatical change. As Lucchesi (2009) notes, when analyzing the pronominal subject in Afro-Brazilian communities, as cited in the epigraph to this subsection, one must always look to the roots of Brazilian Portuguese to fully understand it.

According to Duarte (2019), the assumption that the reduction in the inflectional paradigm of the Brazilian variety is associated with the pronominalization of *a gente* and *você(s)* is invalidated by evidence from the work of Lopes (2002, 2003). According to him, the pronominal reading of these forms, as opposed to a nominal reading, emerged between the 18th and 19th centuries. A period in which, according to Duarte (2018, 2019), we still had a paradigm that distinguished all grammatical persons, as shown in paradigm 1 (Duarte, 2018). For Duarte (1995, 2018, 2019), morphological reductions in BP would only begin in the following century, with a significant change in the transition from the first to the second half of the 20th century. The author's perspective may be a consequence of the late description of data from rural Afro-Brazilian communities in Brazil, where the effects of language contact are more evident.

The first empirical analyses of a possible creolization of BP were carried out in the Afro-Brazilian community of Helvécia, located in Nova Viçosa, Bahia, by Carlota Ferreira (1994), based on annotations of the language spoken there in the early 1960s, and by Baxter and Lucchesi (1993, 1997). However, the history of this Afro-Brazilian community, currently located in Nova Viçosa, Bahia, still requires more detailed research into its sociolinguistic formation. Helvécia originated from the former *Leopoldina Colony* in the early 19th century, around 1818 (Ferreira, 1994; Santos, 2017). It was established by German, Swiss, and French immigrants, along with enslaved Africans who, by 1858, outnumbered settlers by a ratio of ten to one (Ferreira, 1994) — a proportion exceeding the 20% demographic threshold for language speakers (Bickerton, 1981; Carneiro & Almeida, 2011; Lucchesi, 2019). The approximately 10% of colonizers, who spoke languages from different families (Romance and Germanic), are thought to have provided enslaved Africans and their descendants with a second-language model of Portuguese grammar. This hypothesis could shed light on the particular configuration of linguistic contacts established in Helvécia, as enslaved Africans in Leopoldina Colony may have had access to second-language varieties spoken by the colonizers, which broadens the interpretative possibilities regarding creolization and irregular linguistic transmission in the area. In the present study, we adopt the analyses and descriptions of Ferreira (1994), Baxter and Lucchesi (1993, 1997), Silva (2003), Lucchesi, Baxter, and Ribeiro (2009) regarding the community, aiming to develop this discussion in later works.

Other important descriptions of Afro-Brazilian varieties - including the one spoken in Helvécia - were made based on a database created in the 1990s and compiled in *O português afro-brasileiro* (Lucchesi; Baxter; Ribeiro, 2009). Thus, given the scarcity of language spoken data in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in ethnically marked and relatively isolated communities, many phenomena indicative of possible creolization may have been lost due to the rapid de-creolization experienced by isolated rural communities as a result of the industrial and urban processes (Baxter; Lucchesi, 1993, 1997; Lucchesi; Baxter, 2006; Lucchesi; Baxter;

Silva, 2009). Baxter and Lucchesi (1993, 1997) and Ferreira (1994) suggest the possible presence of Creole in Helvécia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Thus, while Duarte (2019) argues that in educated urban varieties, *gente* and *você(s)* began to acquire a pronominal reading while the paradigm still retained many distinctive forms, with morphological simplification occurring only in the mid-20th century. According to Silva (2003) and Lucchesi, Baxter, and Silva (2009), the linguistic variety of Helvécia shows an inflected paradigm prior to this period, particularly evident in the use of *nós* without the application of standard VA rules, especially among older speakers. Therefore, at some point in the second half of the 19th century, the community had a totally standardized verbal paradigm, as indicated by the speech of Helvécia residents, some of whom were over 100 years old (Silva, 2003; Lucchesi; Baxter; Silva, 2009)³. For Silva (2003) and Lucchesi, Baxter and Silva (2009), the form *nós*, as well as the standard VA marks, were being acquired by younger people throughout the second half of the 20th century, due to a process of linguistic leveling initiated by influences from outside the community.

Despite this evidence, Duarte (2019) takes the position that the inflectional reduction caused by the intense linguistic contacts between Africans and Afro-descendants in the learning of Portuguese in Brazil, particularly from the apocope of <s> in the second person singular and the nasal diphthong in the second and third person plural - prior to the pronominalization of *a gente* and *você* - did not produce "a drastic reduction in the verbal paradigm, contrary to what has been suggested" (Duarte, 2019, p. 95). According to her, this was demonstrated by Almeida and Carneiro (2009) when they investigated Portuguese learned as a second language (L2) by Africans through the minutes of the SPD in Bahia. However, when these documents are taken into account, this statement encounters certain obstacles, especially if we consider that the main hypothesis and the empirical understanding of the role of language contacts in the reduction of the inflectional paradigm of BP speakers are primarily based on linguistic variety of relatively isolated Afro-Brazilian communities in the interior of the country (Baxter; Lucchesi, 1993, 1997; Couto, 1996; Lucchesi, 2003, 2017; Lucchesi; Baxter, 2009; Lucchesi *et al.*, 2009) and not on texts written by a small group of literate Africans and Afro-Brazilians in the city of Salvador in the 19th century.

Therefore, the minutes cannot be conclusive in this respect, especially if we consider the contradictions presented by the writers regarding their linguistic competence (Galves, 2019). In addition to the significance of these minutes, there is empirical evidence from the continuum of popular varieties of BP - and Portuguese creoles - that demonstrate how verbal morphemes have been affected by linguistic contacts and the different forms of irregular linguistic transmission resulting from them. (Guy, 1981, 1989; Holm, 1987, 2004; Baxter; Lucchesi, 1993, 1997; Couto, 1996; Lucchesi, 2003; Silva, 2003; Lucchesi; Baxter, 2006; Lucchesi; Baxter; Silva, 2009; Lucchesi *et al.*, 2009).

Looking at the analysis by Lucchesi, Baxter, and Silva (2009), we see, as already mentioned, that the variation in the first person plural is not due to the pronominalization of *a gente* in popular varieties, since this form is more frequent in age group I, while *nós* is present in the speech of older people, who apply less the standard VA rule - <-mos>. The performance of the <s> apocope is so notable in popular varieties that the allomorphs of the inflection of the first person plural *nós* are marked only by the loss of the contrastive consonant of the syllable coda: <-mo> and <-emo>:

- (1) Se 'doece um tomém, a gente **tamo** lá. (HV-04)
- (2) a. Nós **fomo** tudo em Helvécia, mas já faz muito tempo... (HV-19)
- (3) Aí nós **entramo** pra dentro, aí nós **ficamo** lá, nós **ficamo** lá, aí a pouco ININT aquela... aquela bagunça... é... aqueles meninoado... é home com mulé...(HV-07)

³ Ferreira (1994) found participants who had been born in the second half of the 19th century. And in the sample compiled in the 1990s by Alan Baxter and Dante Lucchesi, participants in age group 3 could be grouped into 3 subcategories: 61-80 years old; 81-100 years old; over 100 years (Baxter; Lucchesi, 1999; Silva, 2003; Lucchesi; Baxter, 2006).

(Lucchesi; Baxter; Silva, 2009, p. 362, 363 and 366; emphasis added)

(4) **Plantemo** tá bonitim, aí agora se num tivé cuidado os bicho vai comé tudo, num fica nada, nada.

(5) Quando nós **cheguemo** aqui tava a fartura de feção de corda animadô e abroba, melância e nós **fiquemo** por aqui e até hoje tamo.

(6) Aí nós **oiemo**.

(Parcero, 2007, p. 106; emphasis added)

The examples from Helvécia - (1)-(3) - and Fazenda Maracujá⁴ - (4)-(6) - indicate the recurrence of allomorphs of the standard VA morpheme of the first-person plural, including the form *a gente*. Therefore, the variation in the VA present in BP is mainly a consequence of contact, which resulted in a reduction in the use of the inflectional morphology of the verb, common in creolization processes (Guy, 1981, 1989; Holm, 1987, 2004; Baxter; Lucchesi, 1993, 1997; Lucchesi, 2007, 2009; Lucchesi; Baxter; Silva, 2009).

However, by working only with urban/standard variants, Duarte (1995, 2018, 2019) may not have considered that the process of the lack of agreement marks predates paradigm 3 (20th/2 century), and that the phenomenon of apocope of <s> - as a consequence of the irregular acquisition of Portuguese by Africans (Lucchesi, 2003, 2007, 2009; Lucchesi; Baxter, 2009; Silva; Almeida, 2023; Araujo, 2023) - and the variation in the application of the VA rule may have motivated the process of implementing the pronominal subject expressed in BP in popular varieties (Lucchesi; Baxter; Silva, 2009). Therefore, in the linguistic variety in use in isolated rural communities, two grammars operate, one standard (non-creolizing) and the other non-standard (creolizing) (Silva, 2003; Lucchesi; Baxter; Silva, 2009) - a view also supported by Baxter, Araujo, and Figueiredo (2019), in their analysis of Afro-Brazilians' minutes. Thus, if the speaker realizes the pronominal subject, according to the principle of structural cohesion, the probability of applying the standard VA rule decreases - and vice versa. Thus, unlike Duarte (2019), Lucchesi and Baxter (2006, p. 197) assume that "[...] the development of the pro-drop rule (i.e. the systematic omission of the pronominal subject by the concordant copy of the subject in the verbal inflection) would have been inhibited due to the weakness of the verbal inflection system".

Despite the formulaic and formal writing, the phenomenon of apocope of <s> also appears in the minutes of the SPD - texts written by Africans and Afro-Brazilians and predate paradigm 3 (20th/2 century), as they extend from 1832 to 1894 (Oliveira, 2006; Lobo; Oliveira, 2009; Galves; Lobo, 2019). In these texts, we found deletions of the words <r>, <l> and <s>, with a high frequency of the latter in nominal agreement (NA) - *meze* for *meses*, *senhori* for *senhores*, *martire* for *mártires* - and verbal - *asinamo* for *asinamos*, *istamo* for *estamos* (Oliveira, 2006; Baxter, 2009; Soledade; Santos, 2009; Avelar; Carneiro, 2019; Baxter; Araújo; Figueiredo, 2019). In the case of NA, the maintenance of part of the plural morpheme in the texts of Africans, such as *meze* and *senhori*, indicates the existence of agreement with more than one element (Oliveira, 2006; Oliveira; Soledade; Santos, 2009). This linguistic form is considered by some recent studies to be one of the standard agreement patterns, since there is no total deletion of the segment that marks the agreement; this can also occur with the VA, as in examples 1 to 6. Therefore, the texts of the minutes, written in the mid-19th century, already showed variations in the application of the NA and VA rule similar to those found in rural communities in the second half of the 20th century.

Almeida and Carneiro's (2009) analysis showed a preference for the null subject in these documents and based on this, Duarte (2019) argues that the data on Portuguese acquired as an L2 by Afro-descendants does not differ from that acquired by Brazilians, demonstrating the low relevance of language contacts for the reconfiguration of the NSP in the Brazilian variety. However, we need to consider that the current panorama of sociolinguistics provides sufficient empirical evidence for the relationship between

⁴ In the ongoing research, we analyzed two samples: i) letters produced by poor writers throughout the 20th century (Santiago, 2019); ii) sociolinguistic interviews recorded in the quilombola community of Fazenda Maracujá (Parcero, 2007) - for this reason, we refer to this community.

language contacts and the processes of variation and change in VA, as reflected primarily in the higher degree of variation in the application of this rule within rural communities. This phenomenon may have motivated the reconfiguration of the NSP in BP (Lucchesi, 2007, 2009; Lucchesi; Baxter, 2006; Silva, 2023; Silva; Almeida, 2023; Silva; Araujo, 2023).

In addition to this empirical evidence, other sociodemographic data must also be taken into consideration. The city of Salvador was one of the principal urban centers during the colonial and imperial periods, serving as the capital of the Portuguese colony. The cultivation of the language according to metropolitan norms was regarded as a marker of social refinement (Lucchesi & Baxter, 2006; Lucchesi, 2007). During the nineteenth century, the period in which the SPD minutes were written, less than 1% of the enslaved population of Salvador was literate (Andrade, 1988; Mattoso, 1992). This fact would have directly affected the literacy skills of the freed individuals who founded and participated in the SPD, given that the Africans included in Almeida and Carneiro's (2009) corpus were likely to have acquired literacy "not in their condition as slaves, but as freed persons" (Oliveira & Lobo, 2009, p. 28). In other words, for a long time, they belonged to the 99% who were unable to read or write. Added to this is the social pressure experienced by the editors to approximate the standard norm of the period (Araújo, 2019; Galves, 2019), resulting in texts that aimed to reflect the Portuguese spoken and written by the literate population of the time, trying to align as closely as possible with the European norm - considered the linguistic model. This is particularly evident when we consider that Africans living in urban centers were strongly influenced to conform to the linguistic norm of the time, partly because they recognized the possibilities of social ascension afforded by mastery of this norm (Lucchesi; Baxter, 2006; Mattoso, 1992, 2016).

Therefore, the different levels of literacy present in Almeida and Carneiro's (2009) documents may be behind, for example, the differences in the percentage of null subjects between each writer, which in some cases reach 23%, considering the writers who produced a significant amount of data. The percentages of null subjects in the minutes of the SPD may also be due to the high rates of VAs in the texts, which in turn are influenced by the social pressure of a linguistic norm of the time and a textual genre with a consolidated discursive tradition (Araújo, 2019; Galves, 2019; Santiago; Barbosa, 2021). Thus, to demonstrate the relationship between the VA and the presence or lack of the pronominal subject, we assumed the hypothesis that the high rate of the pronominal subject omission observed in the SPD minutes indicates that these texts are not representative of the language spoken by Africans and Afro-descendants in the period. To this end, we will discuss the percentages of NA (Oliveira; Soledade; Santos, 2009; Avelar; Carneiro, 2019) and VA (Baxter, 2009; Baxter; Araujo and Figueiredo, 2019) in the minutes written by Africans and Afro-descendants, contrasting them, where possible, with some empirical evidence from Afro-Brazilian communities documented in the 20th century (Ferreira, 1994; Silva, 2003; Lucchesi; Baxter, 2006; Lucchesi; Baxter; Silva, 2009).

Almeida and Carneiro's (2009) data on the occurrences of null and overt pronominal subjects generally indicated a high VA rate in the minutes written by Africans, since only 2 out of 145 instances exhibited divergence between the verbal and nominal features—the third-person plural pronoun being realized with the morpheme \emptyset . Thus, the high rate of VA in the minutes produced by Africans, also documented by Baxter (2009) and Baxter, Araujo, and Figueiredo (2019), indicates the existence of a process of instruction, albeit informal - considering the occupation of the writers - in the acquisition of writing. This would reduce the marks of language contact, especially if we understand, as Oliveira and Lobo (2009) indicate, that writing tends to constrain the process of variation and change.

In addition, the writers, recognizing the marginalization of their situation as writers, since few black individuals were literate (Oliveira, 2006; Oliveira; Lobo, 2009), could have sought, through the application of NA and VA, to get closer to the standard norm used by the other majority of the population (Araújo, 2019; Galves, 2019). It is also plausible—our hypothesis—that they used other minutes, produced by more experienced hands, as models for learning and writing, considering the large number of brotherhoods and societies during the colonial and imperial periods, an activity encouraged by both the government and the owners of enslaved persons. This hypothesis, in a way, resonates with Galves' (2019) position that the writers may have acquired their writing skills by learning the formulaic parts of the minutes. The author assumes that agreement in texts goes beyond the phenomenon itself, indicating the writers' textual and discursive skills. In other words, the SPD secretaries mastered the text genre of minutes, writing texts according to the linguistic models of the time, but they had basic spelling and grammar contradictions, such as the difficulty in processing functional elements, like not applying the NA rule to the first element on the left – *o senhores sócios*. In this case, Galves (2019, p. 412) comments that, in some texts, there seems to be a "difficulty in processing the position of the s".

However, Santiago and Barbosa (2021) argue, when analyzing texts from the minutes of the SPD and others written by poor writers in the 20th century, that some morphosyntactic facts need to be analyzed with caution, as they may reflect basic orthographic difficulties, rather than direct evidence of oral language phenomena. According to the authors, the orthographic variation observed in these texts often reflects the writer's inability to reproduce the standard writing models of the period, which reinforces our position of avoiding conclusive generalizations about the data analyzed in the minutes. However, the variation in not applying the NA rule to the first element on the left appears in several writers, indicating that this phenomenon goes beyond the limitations of a single writer. Oliveira (2006), analyzing the minutes, corroborates this perspective, indicating that the apocope of <s> is "numbered in the hundreds in the corpus" (Oliveira, 2006, p. 344). 343), being seen both in fixed forms, such as proper names (*Borge; Fernande; Protectora dos Desvalidos*), and in plural elements (*asinamo; irermo; meze*) (Oliveira, 2006; Avelar; Carneiro, 2019). Therefore, this coexistence of preferences suggests that the causes of the lack of agreement in the minutes of the SPD may vary, including both variation in the application of the rule and scriptural difficulties.

In addition, the hypothesis that orthographic variation results from an inability associated with limited reading of model texts, as argued by Santiago and Barbosa (2021), deserves reconsideration in the context of the SPD minutes. The constant presence of religious brotherhoods in the 19th century played a crucial role in the literacy process of Africans and Afro-descendants (Oliveira, 2006; Mattoso, 2016), possibly creating spaces where reading and writing institutional documents, such as minutes, became common practices. Thus, as we have argued, it is plausible that the writers of the SPD had some level of exposure to the writing models of the period, especially through access to texts produced by other brotherhoods. This exposure may have been one of the agencies of literacy that contributed to the written formation of these writers, even if in a non-systematic way. Therefore, the characteristics observed in the SPD minutes are the result of a complex interaction between individual limitations in scripturality, specific literacy practices, and linguistic conditioning.

In this way, the data from the writers of the SPD should be regarded as relevant to understanding the socio-historical development of BP, although not as definitive evidence. This is particularly due to the small number of texts written by Africans during the slaveholding period, since reading and writing were practices generally associated with specialized professions—occupations that were not typically accessible to enslaved, freed, or free Africans and Afro-descendants of the time (Oliveira & Lobo, 2009; Oliveira, Soledade & Santos, 2009; Lobo & Oliveira, 2019; Mattoso, 1992, 2016)—nor to the majority of the population (Silva, Araújo & Santiago, 2025). For example, the founder of the SPD himself, Manoel Victor Serra, was a "ganhador"⁵, a profession practiced by free and freed captives, Africans and Afro-descendants. Of the five editors of the minutes analyzed by Almeida and Carneiro (2009), three were carpenters, one a bricklayer, and another, a bacon seller. Generally, these occupations did not require the practice of reading and writing as a criterion. However, by extending the analysis to the 15 founders of the SPD, and not limiting it to the clerks, Lobo and Oliveira (2019) point out that seven (46.6%) of them could read, three of whom worked as carpenters, two as bricklayers, one as a "ganhador", and one as a bacon seller. Thus, the majority of the SPD founders did not have the ability to read or write.

When analyzing the applications to join the brotherhood, Lobo and Oliveira (2019) indicate that the occupations of applicants for membership in the SPD were predominantly manual and *did not require literacy*. Of the 322 candidates, 227 (68.3%) worked as masons (27.4%), carpenters⁶ (18.4%), tailors (11.4%), or joiners (11.1%). Mattoso (2016), commenting on the professional life of enslaved people in colonial Brazil - which can be extended to the imperial period of the 19th century - emphasizes that *qualification* referred to profession generally learned through practice, such as barber, musician, bricklayer, seamstress, carpenter, which could have been taught by their "senhor", by a freedman or freewoman and even by another enslaved person. Thus, engaging in a qualified or semi-qualified manual occupation in the 19th century cannot be understood as synonymous with being literate—particularly considering that one of the roles of the brotherhoods was to provide pathways to literacy for Black people, given the social policies of the time that either prohibited or severely restricted their access to formal education (Oliveira & Lobo, 2009; Mattoso, 2016).

⁵ The term refers to people who worked carrying goods and people in a place called Canto do Ganho – an area occupied by free and freed blacks, where they sold their work.

⁶ The term refers to woodworkers; equivalent to *carpenters* (Borba, 2011).

Lobo and Oliveira (2019) report six applicants who identified their occupation as *teacher*, but emphasize that it is not possible to determine the racial classification of these individuals—whether Black, brown, or mixed-ethnic background—although their applications for admission to the SPD were approved. However, it is possible that they did not receive formal education, having instead learned to read through the various literacy networks available at the period—such as their close relationship with their “senhor” (Oliveira, 2006)—and subsequently offered to teach their peers, given the absence of literacy policies for enslaved, free, or freed Africans and Afro-descendants in Brazil during that period.

The irregularity in the writers’ acquisition of writing skills is evident in the different levels of handwriting, since both the minutes written by Africans and those by Afro-Brazilians include representatives of all three levels of writing: elementary or basic, in usual, and in *pura*⁷ (Oliveira & Lobo, 2009; Oliveira, Soledade & Santos, 2009; Santiago & Barbosa, 2021). Oliveira, Soledade, and Santos (2009) observe that the scribes’ graphic execution directly influenced the application of the nominal agreement (NA) rule in the data. For instance, the case of the African Luís Teixeira Gomes, classified as in *pura*, applied the NA rule in 130 out of 144 cases (90%). In contrast, Manuel da Conceição and Manuel Vítor Serra, whose competence was classified as elementary, showed the lowest rates of application of the same rule: 8 out of 17 (47%) and 18 out of 51 (35%), respectively.

These extremes in the rates of nominal agreement (NA) among writers also appear in the data analyzed by Avelar and Carneiro (2019), who examined the minutes written by Afro-Brazilian members. In the texts of Florêncio da Silva Friandes from the 1890s, 194 out of 199 (97%) noun phrases were marked for plurality, whereas at the other end of the spectrum, only 9 out of 24 (27%) terms displayed NA in the texts of Saturnino Rodrigues da Silveira. However, the authors did not discuss the writing levels of these writers. Thus, in the individual analysis of the writers in the works that analyzed them separately, none escaped the variation in the application of the CN rule (Oliveira; Soledade; Santos, 2009; Avelar; Carneiro, 2019). In addition, for Galves (2019), the literacy of generations of Afro-Brazilians from the late 19th century is close to that of schoolchildren in the city of Rio de Janeiro between the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, showing the high level of literacy of some writers.

In the data presented by Baxter, Araujo, and Figueiredo (2019) for VA, the behavior of the writers also reaches extremes. Only one out of twenty-two writers did not display variable application of the agreement rule, since in two minutes, there was only a single instance of a verb with a third-person plural subject in which agreement was realized. However, in the other 21 writers, the use of the VA ranged between 93% for Florêncio da Silva Friandes, based on 44/47 occurrences, and 22% for Luciano da Silva Serra, with 6/21 occurrences. Florêncio da Silva Friandes also achieved high NA rates (Avelar; Carneiro, 2019), which may indicate a more intense literacy process for this writer, in the sense that he experienced various literacy agencies of the period (Oliveira, 2006). At the same time, his application indicated that he was a carpenter, a profession that did not require proficiency in writing. Nevertheless, he authored eight extensive minutes (Oliveira, 2006), demonstrating considerable control of written language. Moreover, together with Faustino Joaquim Santana Trindade Cisne, he was among the few scribes who used the definite article with the nouns *ata* and *assembleia*, as noted by Galves (2019)—a syntactic-discursive context of determination.

Commenting on formulaic constructions such as *lida a ata* and *lida ata*, Galves (2019) argues that in spontaneous speech, the distinction of the article is rarely made, since the noun also begins with the letter a. Nevertheless, Florêncio da Silva Friandes and Faustino Joaquim Santana Trindade Cisne use the article, indicating an abstract understanding of the language on the part of the writers and knowledge of the obligatory use of the article in this context in standard Portuguese. Baxter and Lucchesi (1993, 1997) also reported a reduced use of the article in typical contexts in the Helvécia dialect, in both varieties, a pattern that may indicate the influence of language contact.

Luciano da Silva Serra, despite concentrating 283/1,755 (16%) of the data analyzed by Avelar and Carneiro (2019), is the second writer with the lowest percentage of NA - 91/283 (32%) occurrences. This writer is also the second-lowest in terms of VA in the data

⁷ They refer to the writers’ mastery of writing. The elementary or basic level is characterized primarily by poor handwriting, difficulty in aligning letters, the use of capital letters within words, and a limited use of abbreviations. At the intermediate level—the most common one—the handwriting is noticeably more fluid than at the basic level, and there is a greater use of abbreviations. The *in pura* hands already display more carefully executed handwriting, with greater detail, revealing increased confidence and technical skill in writing (Petrucci, 1978).

of Baxter, Araújo, and Figueiredo (2019), having realized a standard VA in only 6 out of 27 instances (22%) of third-person plural verbs. In Galves' (2019) analysis, this writer displays, across his 45 minutes, an incipient level of acquisition of the VA rules of Portuguese. Alongside Saturnino Rodrigues da Silveira and Manuel Anastácio Cajueiro, he demonstrates difficulty in segmenting written text, further indicating the irregular acquisition of Portuguese by Africans and Afro-descendants:

- (7) a. Eu Segundo Secreta/rio qu **a fiz** i acineme. (LSS, 1885)
 b. Eu Segundo Secretario que **afiz** iacineme. (LSS, 1885)
 c. Eu Segundo Secretario/que **a fiz e a cinene**. (LSS, 1885)
 d. Eu Segundo Secretario que **fiz ea cineme**. (LSS, 1886)
 e. Eu Segundo Secretario/qu **a fiz e a Sineme**. (LSS, 1887)

(Galves, 2019, p. 411)

- (8) e por ser a Conta dos/Senhores haxo bom *que* vom dar a explicação ientao/sendo explicado a dita Conta **achavas** duas parce-/las iguaes desedisse ter Sido aumento de quem fez a/Conta. (AJB, 1864)

- (9) a brio a Seiçao o dicto *Senhor*/ao meio dia feita a chamada da forma/do Costume, **achavas se** presente 14 Senhores/Socios. (AJB, 1864)

(Galves, 2019, p. 411)

The examples taken from the minutes written by Luciano da Silva Serra show the difficulties in his writing. The sentences in (7), although formulaic, show variations in spelling - *cineme*, *cinene*, and *Sineme* - and in the segmentation of words, especially verbs and clitic pronouns - *iacineme*, *a cinene*, and *ea cineme*. The inconsistency in these forms shows the writers' difficulty in assimilating verbal inflection patterns and pronoun usage. The post-verbal clitic *se* even appears as a simple *s*, resembling the plural marker, and shows clitic doubling, as illustrated in examples (8) and (9)—reflecting an incipient level of writing proficiency. As far as Luciano da Silva Serra is concerned, we could relate the graphic problems to the lack of some kind of formal instruction. However, unlike Florêncio da Silva Friandes, Luciano da Silva Serra's application does not indicate his profession, stating only that he was widowed and had a daughter, thus providing no evidence to support this hypothesis.

Thus, it is evident that the high rates of NA and VA remain consistently associated with the same individuals in the Afro-Brazilian minutes, indicating distinct literacy processes among the scribes. Therefore, while the data from these documents are representative—particularly when considering evidence of difficulties in processing functional categories expressed through morphological elements, as in examples (7)—they cannot be generalized to the extent of downplaying the role of language contact dynamics in the changes to the inflectional paradigm of Brazilian Portuguese.

In general, the NA and VA data in the minutes of Africans and Afro-descendants behaves as follows:

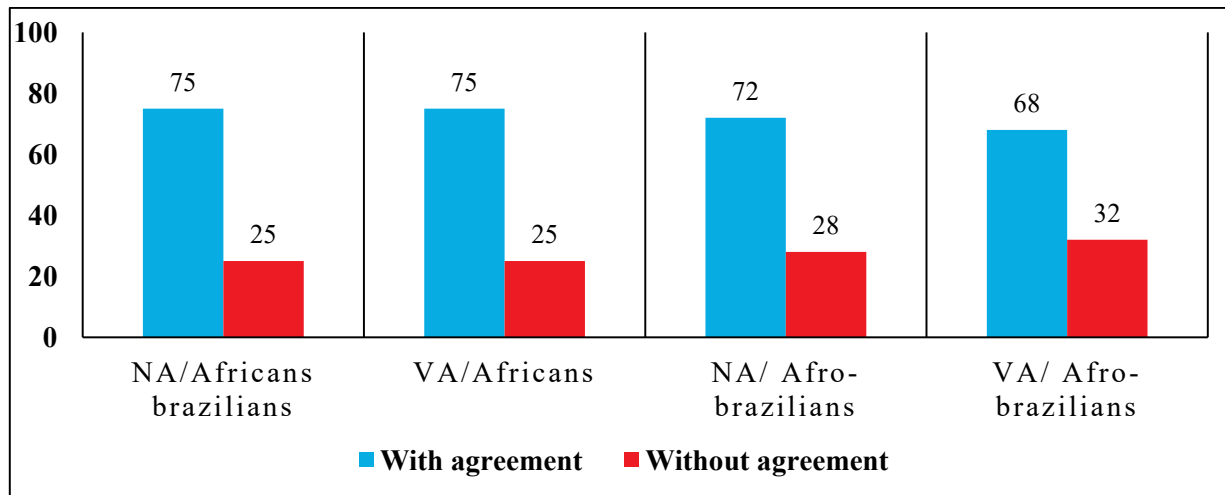


Chart 1: Nominal and verbal agreement in the minutes of the Sociedade Protetora dos Desvalidos

Source: Adapted from Baxter (2009), Olivera, Soledade and Santos (2009), Avelar and Carneiro (2019) and Baxter, Araujo, Figueiredo (2019)

This chart shows that the percentages of NA and VA in the texts of Africans remain the same. The data shows that the use of one type of agreement ends up favoring the other: Africans used high rates of NA and VA, with the percentages standing at 75%. Among Afro-Brazilians, although NA remained at a similar level (72%), there was a slight reduction in the application of the VA rule (68%). This decrease in NA may have facilitated VA, but the effect appears minimal. The slight discrepancy between these groups becomes more apparent when examining the rates of non-agreement: while 25% of Africans' instances show deviations, among Afro-Brazilians, these rates increase to 28% for NA and 32% for VA. These results suggest that, although both groups demonstrate considerable command of agreement rules, Afro-Brazilians—despite producing longer texts (their minutes can reach up to four pages, whereas those of Africans do not exceed one, indicating greater proficiency in Portuguese; Oliveira, 2006; Araújo, 2019; Galves, 2019)—exhibit greater difficulty maintaining consistency, particularly concerning VA.

By writing more, Afro-Brazilian writers would have been more susceptible to influence from the spoken language, as the non-formulaic sections of the minutes were more extensive. This suggests that the application of the VA rule was likely far more variable in oral speech than is reflected in the minutes written by Africans. For example, if we consider the *Helvécia* data (Silva, 2003; Lucchesi, Baxter & Ribeiro, 2009) as the closest approximation to the spoken language of Africans in the late 19th century available to us, we observe a significant alteration in VA, including in the first-person singular, with constructions such as *eu fala* and *eu falou*. These examples empirically support the hypothesis of a temporarily uniform verbal paradigm within the community at some point during the 19th century (Silva, 2003; Lucchesi, Baxter & Silva, 2009). Some of the phenomena described by Silva (2003) and Lucchesi, Baxter, and Silva (2009) were also observed in Ferreira's (1994) analysis, based on data from the 1960s, showing that among Africans and Afro-descendants, a morphologically highly altered form of Portuguese circulated, with strong indications of creolization.

Thus, after analyzing the percentages of NA and VA in the minutes, we observed that the writers showed considerable mastery of the rules of agreement, but also different behaviors in their individual performance. In this context, the rates of null subjects are understandable, since the presence of verbal morphology in the texts would license the omission of the pronominal subject. This is the position of Almeida and Carneiro (2009), who identify a null-subject grammar operating in the written language used by Africans in Brazil in the mid-19th century, as 118 out of 145 instances (81%) involved the omission of the pronominal subject:

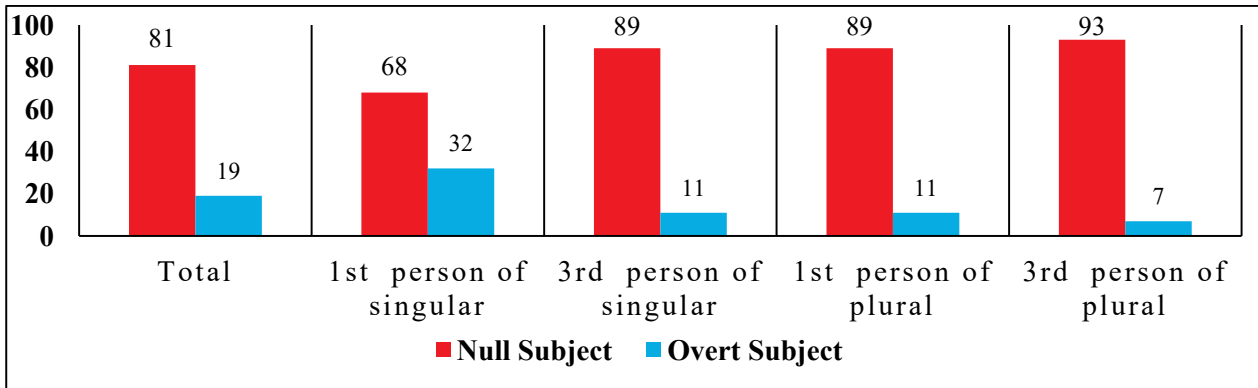


Chart 2: Null vs overt subject in the minutes of the Africans from the Sociedade Protetora dos Desvalidos

Source: Adapted from Almeida and Carneiro (2009)

Almeida and Carneiro's (2009) percentages correspond to a total of 145 occurrences in the minutes written between 1832 and 1842. In general, the omission of the pronominal subject is significant: 68% and 89% respectively in the first person singular and plural; 89% and 93% respectively in the third person singular and plural. Due to the typology of the documents, the second person (singular/plural) has no occurrence in the texts (Almeida; Carneiro, 2009). The total percentage of 81% is close to that presented by Duarte (2018) for the year 1845, which was 80%, suggesting that the minutes may reflect the Portuguese spoken by the literate population of the time. This provides evidence of the influence of literacy on the grammar of Africans who learned the Brazilian variety as an L2 or, as Araújo (2019) states, of social pressure affecting a group of Africans—possibly freed former slaves—who were attempting to approximate the standard Portuguese of the period. Galves (2019) supports this view by arguing that the occurrence of VA in the minutes extends beyond a purely linguistic phenomenon, reflecting the writers' greater textual and discursive competence, as noted above.

The data on the null subjects in the minutes written by Africans allow us to observe the behavior of this variable, but with the caveat that it should not be generalized to language contact situations, thereby treating this sociohistorical factor as secondary in the reconfiguration of the NSP in BP. This caution is especially warranted given the scarcity of written documents by Africans during the period of enslavement (Oliveira & Lobo, 2009) and the exceptional nature of literate Black people in colonial Brazil. This caution with the use of data is noticeable in the various texts comprising the volumes that analyze the SPD minutes (Lobo & Oliveira, 2009; Galves & Lobo, 2019).

As indicated, the percentages of Almeida and Carneiro (2009) for the period between 1832 and 1842 are close to those presented by Duarte (2018) for 1845:

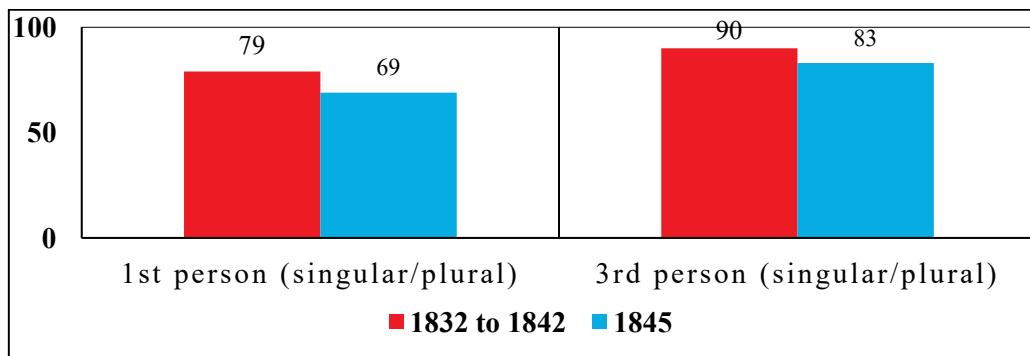


Chart 3: Null subject in texts written between 1832 and 1845

Source: Adapted from Duarte (2018a) and Almeida and Carneiro (2009)

This chart indicates that, in both grammatical persons, the minutes of the Africans surpassed the text of the plays analyzed by Duarte (2018), with the 10% of the first person (singular/plural) being the most significant. This indicates that the documents in question, possibly due to their highly formulaic nature, are strongly influenced by a European norm and do not reflect the Portuguese spoken

by Africans and their descendants during the period. ⁸The issue of the minutes studied by Almeida and Carneiro (2009) not representing the vernacular of Africans and Afro-descendants becomes apparent when we compare their data, from Africans in the SPD, with those analyzed by Pitombo and Almeida (2019), from Afro-Brazilian scribes who already spoke Brazilian Portuguese as their first language:

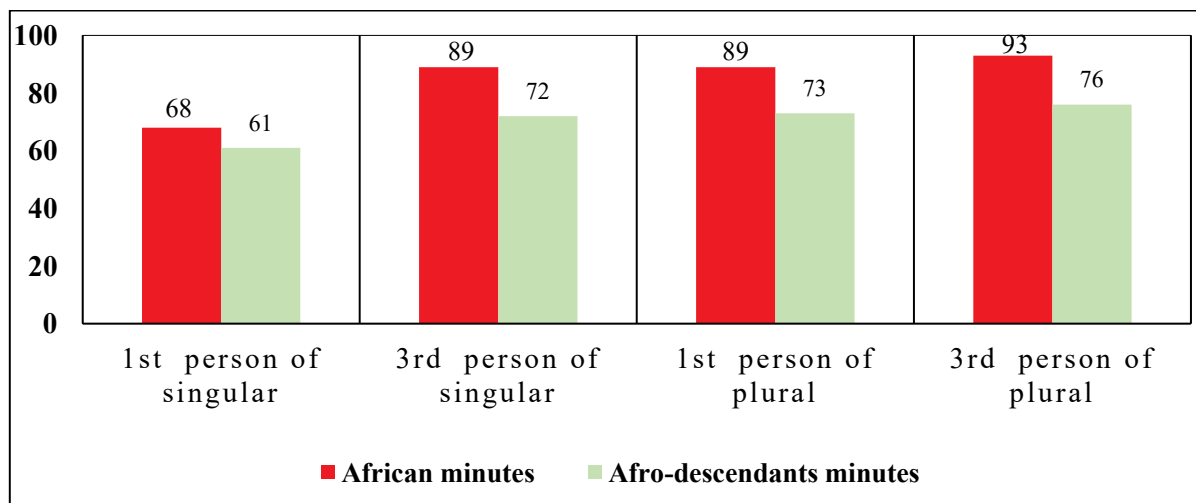


Chart 4: Null subject in the minutes of the Sociedade Protetora dos Desvalidos in the 19th century

Source: Adapted from Almeida and Carneiro (2009) and Pitombo and Almeida (2019)

The data presented in the chart provide a new perspective on the SPD minutes, as the percentage differences reveal significant variation in the use of this phenomenon across grammatical persons. The null subject, characteristic of the Portuguese of the time, shows high rates in both groups, but with significant variations. While in the minutes of the Africans, the use of the null subject is more frequent, reaching 93% in the third person plural, the Afro-Brazilians show a more modest percentage, with 76% in the same grammatical person. Thus, in the percentages reported by Pitombo and Almeida (2019), the omission of the pronominal subject is lower than in Almeida and Carneiro (2009), which may indicate that the language learned as a first language by Afro-descendants was already beginning to show instances of pronominal subject realization. As Duarte (2018) notes, between the second half of the 19th century and the end of the twentieth century, the overt pronominal subject became increasingly the preferred option among native Brazilians. It should be noted that, with a greater mastery of Portuguese among Afro-Brazilians (Galves, 2019), the rates of null subjects decrease compared to the minutes written by Africans. This provides strong evidence that the data available for the acquisition of Afro-descendants showed higher rates of overt pronominal subject, even manifesting in highly formulaic writing, such as the minutes.

In the chart above, the smallest percentage difference occurs with the first-person singular (7%), slightly favoring the use of the overt subject pronoun in the Afro-Brazilian texts. In the other persons, the percentages exceeded 10%: 17% in the third person singular and plural, even though this was a context of resistance in which change was implemented more slowly (Duarte, 1995, 2018, 2019; Lucchesi, 2009); this number was very close in the first-person plural, 16% more subjects. Therefore, the comparison suggests that two grammars were possibly at play in the SPD minutes: one in which the null subject was preferred, and another in which the overt pronominal subject was beginning to emerge. This indicates the emergence of a grammar with Brazilian features, especially considering that, unlike the texts by Africans, which are concentrated in the first half of the 19th century, the data from Afro-Brazilian writers extend until the end of that century (1832–1890).

Analyzing the issue of formulaicity in the texts and its relation to pronominal subject omission, we observe an interesting phenomenon in the minutes written by Africans: contrary to what might be expected, the less formulaic sections show the highest

⁸ Lobo and Oliveira (2019) analyzed the applications for entry into the SPD, aiming to outline the social profile of the members of this brotherhood. According to them, considering 322 applications found, only 167 had their place of birth declared, and of these, only 2 were not born in Bahia. In view of this, the adjective *Afro-Brazilian* could be added to *Baiano*, since the city of Salvador was known as Bahia at the time and had a population mostly of African descent.

rate of omission (97%), while the more formulaic sections show a lower rate, though still above 70%. Unlike the Africans, the highest rates of null subjects in the minutes written by Afro-Brazilians occur in the more fixed sections of the minutes genre. It reassures that, in the second half of the 19th century, more data on overt subjects were available for Africans in the process of acquiring Portuguese. Pitombo and Almeida's (2019) analysis showed that the more formulaic aspect was indeed significant for subject omission, with a rate of 87% and a relative weight (R.W.) of 0.75, highlighting the strong effect of this factor, compared to 63% (0.41) in the less formulaic sections. This last percentage seems to indicate the beginning of the completion of the subject position in BP in the texts of Afro-descendants.

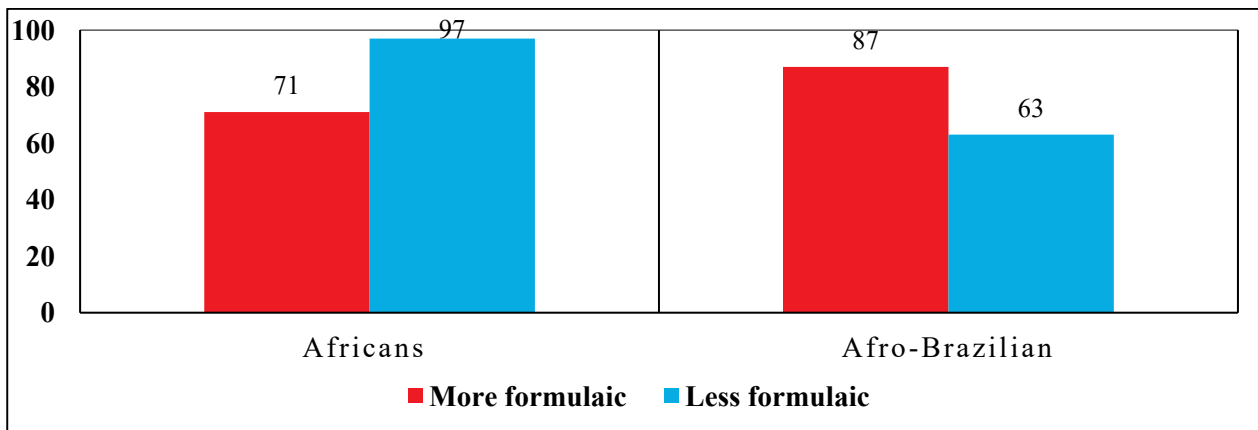


Chart 5: Null subject in formulaic parts of the minutes of the Sociedade Protetora dos Desvalidos

Source: Adapted from Almeida and Carneiro (2009) and Pitombo and Almeida (2019)

In the meeting minutes, the degree of formulaicity appears to be a decisive factor in whether the pronominal subject is omitted or expressed. For Galves (2019), it is necessary to question whether what matters in these texts is frequency or distribution, since "a less skilled secretary who limits himself to the use of formulas may use more null subjects than a more prolific, verbose and less formulaic one" (Galves, 2019, p. 400). Araújo (2009, 2019) even comments on the existence of null topics in the minutes as a possibility used, mainly by Africans, to get closer to the grammar of the null subject of the time.

According to Araújo (2009, 2019), the minutes provide a context for topics, as they correspond to information shared among interlocutors. However, being a formal text, they do not directly reflect the spontaneity of the language and inhibit certain types of constructions. Ribeiro (2015), in comparing the data of one of the SPD writers—Gregório Joaquim de Santana Gomes Ferrão, an Afro-Brazilian—with those of the Helvécia informant (HV-19, 108 years old), notes that the latter's data indicate that, in the 19th century, the only way a null subject could be licensed in this informant's grammar was through a null operator or a null topic. "Therefore, it is likely that, as in the Portuguese spoken in Helvécia, the null subject in the SPD minutes was licensed by other linguistic mechanisms, representing a way for the writers to approximate the standard European Portuguese grammar (Araújo, 2009, 2019).

However, Araújo (2019) assumes that constructions with a null subject and a null topic appear in the minutes, and that the difference between them lies in the recovery of the omitted element.

(10) respondeo o Socio Cladio nada quis dizer naquela O Cazião para não envergonhar Ø pois Ø chegou até levarme 400 réis de soc-orro. E Ø não me aparecia levando ate 2 mezes que Ø la não hia. (AJB.d26.1864)

(Araujo, 2019, p. 306; emphasis added)

9 At 108 years old, informant HV-19 was born in the late second half of the nineteenth century, acquiring features of the grammar characteristic of that period. Considering that the emergence of a genuinely Brazilian grammar (Tarallo, 1993, 2018) is situated between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this informant is representative of the competing grammatical norms from which BP emerged.

In the case of a null topic, unlike other constructions, the omission cannot be recovered within the immediate context of the text, but only within a broader context, with the reference to the omitted element sometimes appearing in other minutes. In (10), the pronominal omissions (\emptyset) refer not to the *sócio Cladio*, but to Damião Lisboa. At the beginning of the minutes, the writer refers to the member who took money from the SPD but didn't return it. After all members had spoken on the matter, at the end of the minutes, *Cladio* requests the floor and makes the statement shown in (10). In other words, Damião Lisboa's name does not appear in the text or in the immediate context, because it is part of shared knowledge among those present at the meeting. According to Araújo (2009, 2019), this type of construction is innovative in the texts of the period. It may have been used as a strategy, resulting from contact with the informants' languages, to approximate sentences with a null subject.

Almeida and Carneiro (2009) and Pitombo and Almeida (2019) do not mention the null topic in their analysis as a strategy for omitting an operator. Araújo (2011), however, presented a contrastive analysis of the minutes regarding null topic and null subject constructions. Despite searching through academic databases and journal portals, as well as contacting the author and the Brazilian Linguistics Association (ABRALIN) via e-mail, we have been unable to locate the text presented at the VII International ABRALIN Congress in 2011. We were unable to find the text to examine the behavior of these two phenomena in the minutes, and there is no sufficient time for a reanalysis in the current research. Despite this, Araújo's study (2009, 2019) allows us to glimpse the relationship between spoken and written language present in the texts. This relationship was also addressed by Duarte (2018) regarding the frequency of null subjects. By reviewing a recording of one of the analyzed plays—from 1992—and comparing pronominal subject omission in the written and spoken text, Duarte observed a preference for pronominal subject realization in speech. A similar phenomenon could also have occurred in the mid-19th century, but we lack documentary evidence for this, as there are no records of the spoken language from that period. However, the lower rates observed in the minutes written by Afro-descendants may be indicative of this, as previously discussed; Lucchesi's (2009) analysis shows that in Helvécia the rate of null subjects was low (1,255 out of 4,599 instances, or 27%).

However, it is peculiar that, even in the face of high VA rates, null topic constructions appear in the minutes of the SPD (Araújo, 2009, 2019). Considering the principle that the interpretation of this type of construction depends only on context and does not require any form of agreement (Araújo, 2009, 2019), one would expect that high rates of VA would inhibit the occurrence of null topics. However, the persistence of these constructions may reflect both a process of pronominal change in BP and the irregular nature of the Africans' language acquisition, as they relied on strategies from their native languages when attempting to reproduce null-subject constructions (Araújo, 2019).

Thus, when making careful use of “bad data” (Labov, 2008; Mattos & Silva, 2008)—such as the minutes in question—it is important to consider that documents from past synchronic states may not capture the vernacular of those who produced them, as Duarte (2019) warns. This is particularly true for highly formulaic texts, as the minutes, and given that in the 19th century, access to reading and writing for Africans and Afro-descendants, even if free, was limited (Mattoso, 1992, 2016; Oliveira, 2006). Therefore, these texts do not reflect the vernacular but rather a form of writing under strong social pressure to approximate the standard language. In addition, in Brazil, the minutes may have been influenced by the establishment of the modern EP norm at the end of the 19th century, which possibly influenced the norm in the colony (Pagotto, 1998; Duarte, 2019).

An indication of the difference between speech and writing in the period analyzed can be found in the four occurrences of the pronoun *você* in the minutes of Afro-Brazilians from the second half of the 19th century:

(11) **Vosei** fez isto- é por que mipidio cem milres emprestado como eu não lidei vosei so deseja mi fazel mal é **ivocei** é muito infamio. (JCB, 1890)

(12) O Senhor Teresio <1º.Secretário> reclama do ex thizoureiro/Senhor Siviriano Pedro 3 meses de mencialdadi di-/sua senhora que ele pagou e não foi dis carregando no-/livro que o exthizoureiro disse por que o Senhor não me lembro/ mi e **voçe**i não lembrumi di [man nhzo]. (JCB, 1890)

(Pitombo; Almeida, 2019, p. 269; emphasis added)

Although the typology of the documents does not allow the use of the second person, the pronoun *você* appears in the minutes categorically as an expressed subject, indicating a possible widespread use in the Portuguese spoken by Afro-descendants (Pitombo; Almeida, 2019). For Pitombo and Almeida (2019), in the second half of the 19th century, the speech of Afro-descendants already had a reduced inflectional paradigm, in which the second- and third-person singular already had indistinct forms. Thus, while Duarte (2018) identifies the uniformity of the second- and third-person singular forms in the second half of the twentieth century, Pitombo and Almeida (2019) provide evidence of an earlier indistinction in the speech of Afro-descendants. This finding supports the position adopted in this study—that the simplification of the pronominal paradigm in BP predates the second half of the 20th century (Duarte, 1995, 2018).

3 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this article, we aimed to contribute to the understanding of the sociolinguistic processes that shaped the grammar of BP. By integrating socio-historical and linguistic data, we highlighted the significance of language contacts and the Irregular Linguistic Transmission processes in the formation of BP, particularly concerning the reduction of the inflectional paradigm and the reconfiguration of the Null Subject Parameter in the Brazilian variety.

Revisiting the analyses of Oliveira, Soledade, and Santos (2009), Baxter (2009), Avelar and Carneiro (2019), and Baxter, Araújo, and Figueiredo (2019) regarding VA and NA in the SPD minutes, as well as those of Almeida and Carneiro (2009) and Pitombo and Almeida (2019) on the null subject phenomenon, this study demonstrates that changes in the inflectional paradigm of BP and in the Null Subject Parameter cannot be analyzed in isolation. Rather, they must be understood as the result of a complex interaction of historical, social, and linguistic factors, as argued here and in previous work (Silva, 2023; Silva & Almeida, 2023; Silva & Araújo, 2023; Silva, Araújo & Santiago, 2025).

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