

THE FOURTH WAVE: SOCIOLINGUISTIC ACTIVISM IN BRAZIL

A QUARTA ONDA: ATIVISMO SOCIOLINGUÍSTICO NO BRASIL

THE FOURTH WAVE: SOCIOLINGUISTIC ACTIVISM IN BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT: Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and society. Despite the sensitivity of that interface, the organization of knowledge development is clustered in trends, or waves, that set and support a hegemony, which is maintained by the funding guidelines and the social bias that maintains the *habitus*. I show how education is the key to shifting agendas and recreate a path that reveals the emerging spaces of non-hegemonic agendas in Brazilian sociolinguistics. To do so, I follow the proposal of organization in waves and its resignification in the Brazilian research scenario, with special attention to the fourth wave, that of sociolinguistic activism.

KEYWORDS Keywords: Sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistic activism. Education.

RESUMO: A sociolinguística estuda as relações entre língua e sociedade. Apesar da sensibilidade inerente da interface, a organização da produção do conhecimento se agrupa em tendências, ou ondas, que configuram e mantêm uma hegemonia, mantida pelo direcionamento de fomento e pelo viés social que mantêm o *habitus*. Mostro como a escolarização é a chave para a mudança de pautas e refaço um percurso que aponta os espaços de ascensão das pautas não hegemônicas na sociolinguística brasileira. Para tanto, sigo a proposta de organização em ondas e a sua ressignificação no cenário de pesquisa brasileira, com especial ênfase na quarta onda, a do ativismo sociolinguístico.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Sociolinguística. Ativismo sociolinguístico. Educação.

RESUMEN: La sociolingüística estudia la relación entre lengua y sociedad. A pesar de la sensibilidad inherente de la interfaz, la organización de la producción de conocimiento se agrupa en tendencias u olas, que configuran y mantienen una hegemonía, que permanece por la orientación de la promoción y el sesgo social que mantiene el *habitus*. Muestro cómo la escolarización es la clave para el cambio de directrices y trazo un camino que señala los espacios de ascenso de las directrices no hegemónicas en la sociolingüística brasileña. Para ello, sigo la propuesta de organización en olas y su resignificación en el escenario de la investigación brasileña, con especial énfasis en la cuarta ola, la del activismo sociolingüístico.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Sociolingüística. Activismo sociolingüístico. Educación.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Hegemony in academia can be built by the effect of *habitus*: we do it the same way because it is the way that we have always done it. However, hegemony can also be the result of the golden rule: whoever has the gold makes the rule.

Repeating formulas that work in order to maintain results that comply with expectations without taking risks. It does not happen out of convenience, but out of acculturation. We need to reach a result to be able to boost the funding flow. One has to get a certain number of papers published in journals (and not in any journal; only the a priori *Qualified* are valid) in order to have a chance to apply for a funding grant, to have career progression, or simply to stay in the research loop, registered in a graduate program. There are fewer risks in trying to publish a paper with a topic approached in the way that is expected in the field of research than a paper resulting from the experimentation of new approaches or in new groups or communities (which may or may not have to reach publishable results). Thus, the system revolves around hegemony. This is not a singularity of linguistics nor of sociolinguistics; the golden rule drives the entire scientific system.

In an interface that works with the relationship between language and society as sociolinguistics does, the place for the counterhegemonic can be opened as long as the conditions for that are given. In this paper, I retrace a path that shows the rise of counter-hegemonic agendas in Brazilian sociolinguistics. Whoever has the privilege of being in the hegemonic role position may be surprised by the strength of some positions; this is a counter-hegemonic perspective, even in the narrative. The hegemonic position is what has been given and established in the major centers that traditionally have polarized research trends in Brazil. The counter-hegemonic arises when favorable conditions are formed, when there is an openness or the possibility of an openness; this is what happens outside the major centers. To tell the history about the counter-hegemonic emergence, I follow the approach of organizing knowledge in waves and its resignification in the Brazilian research scenario, with particular emphasis on the fourth wave, that of sociolinguistic activism.

2 THE WAVES IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS

In Science, one way of organizing ways of making a field of knowledge has been called “waves”. In common, the wave proposals in science have a retrospective dimension: we only see the wave that has passed or is passing; we don't predict the wave that will come. Some people say that the wave metaphor is not the most accurate because it gives the idea of succession, which is not the case. To eliminate this inaccuracy, “making waves” could be compared to trends. One trend is not replaced by another; on the contrary, trends can coexist and continue. And this is how waves in science should be regarded.

There are waves for organizing feminist movements, just as, for example, there are waves for organizing globalization (MARTELL, 2007). There are also waves in sociolinguistics. From her trajectory as a researcher and activist, we can assume that, inspired by the waves of the feminist movement, Penelope Eckert (2012[2008], 2018) proposes an organization in waves for the way of doing sociolinguistics, specifically the one with a variationist orientation. First-wave studies seek to map a speech community in search of regular patterns of variants through quick and large-scale data collection to track linguistic variation and its correlation with broader sociodemographic categories. Second-wave studies seek to correlate linguistic variables with more abstract sociodemographic categories, such as liking or disliking the city, demanding approaches with a little more of community engagement. Penelope Eckert (2018) emphasizes so much that waves are not successive that the example she chooses for a second-wave study (William Labov's 1963 master's thesis about the centralization of diphthongs on Martha's Vineyard) is temporally prior to the first-wave (patterns of distribution in New York City, his doctoral dissertation, in 1966).

So-called third wave studies have a focus on seeking the capture of the social meaning of linguistic variables, exploring issues that are more related to style and identity than to dialectal patterns. Instead of broad sociodemographic categorizations into groups, third-wave studies are concerned with more dynamic *personae*. Variation then is part of a process of indexicality, the cultural construction of the social value of a linguistic feature to a group of people or a community of practice. Whereas in first and second

wave studies, the variable is defined *a priori*, in third wave studies, one of the goals is to identify how people self-identify and self-construct themselves in that community.

It is not always clear how people identify themselves within a community; what makes a variable sensitive or not sensitive to evaluation in a community can be linked to its degree of salience, whether linguistic, semiotic, social, or ideological.

The waves, more specifically third-wave studies, greatly impact how sociolinguistic research is conducted. The agenda of third-wave studies in sociolinguistics seeks to investigate how social constraints and power relations affect linguistic variation to identify the social meaning of linguistic variation, which arises in a dynamic way from social practices and pragmatic activities in which variation contributes to the composition of styles or personae. This approach brings methodological challenges (FREITAG; MARTINS; TAVARES, 2012) because of the focus on linguistic variation in communities of practice and the categorization of social features beyond sociodemographic categories, as is the pattern in the linguistic documentation protocols of first-wave studies.

Sociolinguistics in Brazil has been primarily structured around the use of standardized samples to support linguistic descriptions in activities of linguistic documentation that are commonly referred to as “sociolinguistic databases” (FREITAG et al. 2021, FREITAG, 2022). Taking a retrospective view (FREITAG, 2016a), sociolinguistics in Brazil was established as a field at the same time that graduate programs were also established in Brazil, and the methodological setup of research was and is still strongly affected by the financial support available for research. In this context, structural projects that generate outputs such as PEUL (PAIVA; SILVA, 2012), VARSUL (COLLISCHONN; MONARETTO, 2012), IBORUNA (GONÇALVES, 2019), VALCO (DETTONI et al., 2012), and PortVIX (YACOVENCO et al., 2012), among others, are carried out and subsidize a body of investigations that, together, contribute to the description of Brazilian Portuguese, more specifically, to a Brazilian standard of Portuguese. As they have become commodities, database uses go beyond the role of sociolinguistic description and subsidize studies that aim to test theories or pursue theoretical interfaces, both with formal approaches (parametric sociolinguistics, competition of grammars) and functional approaches (sociofunctionalism, grammaticalization) (GÖRSKI; MARTINS, 2021).

Funding constraints continue to set the agenda for science in Brazil, especially in the humanities, which is increasingly strangled in the order of priority and strategic areas. Just as first-wave sociolinguistics was reassigned to the data collection, the sociolinguistic databases, for describing dialectal patterns and for testing theories, what we call third-wave sociolinguistics in Brazil also seems to be reassigned: the recognizing of the constitutive role of variation is resignified as research with more engagement and social embedding, with explicit verbatim alignment to a third-wave of sociolinguistics, not limited to linguistic description, but also to seeking the visibility of a minority or socially under-represented groups, such as gays, women and their intersectionalities (e.g. VELOSO, 2014; FREITAG; SEVERO, 2015; FERRAZ, et al. 2016; CARVALHO; ALMEIDA, 2017; CARVALHO, 2017; LISBOA; PEREIRA, 2017; GHESSI-ARROYO; PELUCO, 2020; RIBEIRO, 2021; CAMPOS; CERQUEIRA, 2022; SOUZA-SILVA; LUCENA, 2021; ZAMBRANO, 2022, among others), but also explicitly taking on categories such as race, social class, and religion, which do not configure the arrangements of linguistic documentation actions that have given rise to sociolinguistic databases (e.g., SANTOS; PARCERO, 2018; CERQUEIRA, 2020, among others, for race; SANTANA; ANDRADE; FREITAG, 2015; SOUZA; LOPES, 2021, among others, for religion), as well as the search for an approach within sociolinguistic activism arenas, in physical and virtual social networks (e.g. SANTANA, 2018; AMARAL, 2022), and schools (e.g., CAMACHO; SALOMÃO-CONCHALO, 2016; VALADARES; SANTOS, 2019; MELO, 2020; RIBEIRO 2021; BARBOSA; MARRA, 2022; RODRIGUES; VIEIRA, 2022; GHESSI-ARROYO, 2022). The strength of the third wave of resignification has been such a strong trend in sociolinguistics in Brazil that the seminal paper by Penelope Eckert (2012) was translated into Portuguese (2022) in less than ten years; seminal books such as *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (LABOV, 1972a) and *Empirical Foundations for a Theory of Language Change* (WEINREICH; LABOV, HERZOG, 1968) took more than 50 years to be translated into Portuguese; and *Language in the inner city* (LABOV, 1972b) has not been translated yet.

This change in the *modus operandi* of Brazilian sociolinguistic studies, in particular, research oriented towards communities of practice, does not substitute the sociolinguistic database approach, which also seeks the resignification for social insertion and engagement; even research that is aligned with the first and second waves has prospected actions for sociolinguistic activism to maintain the sustainability of Brazilian (socio)linguistic research (MACHADO-VIEIRA et al., 2021; FREITAG, 2022).

Nevertheless, Penelope Eckert was not the only author to propose wave arrangements in sociolinguistics. Allan Bell (2016) proposes such an organization based on the observation of studies that have been published in the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/14679841>>. In his way of organizing the trends, Bell identifies one trend or wave of studies dealing with social issues that have a linguistic expression and another in which a linguistic investigation is carried out on real societal data. A third trend or wave would be a socially constituted linguistics, in which language is inherently social and society is inherently linguistic. The outline of the studies published in the journal leads Bell to conclude that the field has been moving from the first and second waves to the third. Another proposal for a wave arrangement was made by Anne Charity-Hudley (2013), who focused on sociolinguistic activism, as discussed in the following section.

Before concluding this section, however, a few words about waves need to be mentioned (and recalled throughout this paper): in all fields of science, wave classification is retrospective. This means creating a link between studies already done from a point of interest, which is defined by the one who sets out to organize them. We can see the outlining of new waves; the feminist movement, for example, has actually taken on the organization of a new perspective of studies that is aligned with a fourth wave. Waves are retrospective; one cannot force an ongoing wave to be what one wants. Prospective approaches of how science should behave are not waves or trends but rather predictions.

The role of a retrospective is always privileged one, as it makes it possible to look at trends that have been established and make judgments on how they could have been done; it is not, however, a fair judgment of who was “jumping on the bandwagon” at that time. The research agenda and the funding go hand in hand: one does not always (almost never) research what one wants; one researches what is achievable, either in regards to funding, ethical constraints, or theme latency. Research that demands a huge number of resources for collecting, processing, storing, and making data available, highly specialized staff, and infrastructure is driven by the funder's agenda. In the early years of graduate studies in Brazil, the funding policy used to prioritize structural projects served a larger team and originated traditional sociolinguistic databases (FREITAG, 2016a). In the last five years, the funding policy has defined priority areas in the field of technology. Ordinance 5109/2021 of the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation enumerates priority technologies for funding: strategic, enabling, production, sustainable development, quality of life, promotion, popularization, and dissemination of science, technology, and innovation. Although there is a paragraph in which basic science, humanities, and applied social science projects are also priorities, the priority is only effective if the theme is aligned with the development of technologies, leading sociolinguistic research to seek interfaces with the field of natural language processing or the power of large language models such as ChatGPT. Thus, the resignification of the third wave of sociolinguistics in Brazil, especially in already established sociolinguistic databases, seems to also reflect the need for the survival and the sustainability of research, since the dissemination of science gives sociolinguistics the possibility of social insertion.

It may seem redundant to say social insertion of sociolinguistics, but if the prioritization of funding at earlier times aimed at a comprehensive and standardized description, in accordance with linguistic documentation for linguistic description, the social component did not necessarily take importance. It is not for the lack of sensitivity or interest from the scientific community, but because of the need to fit the funding policies. The done is better than the perfect (it doesn't sound good in English, but in Portuguese, *O feito é melhor que o perfeito*). The criticism of how it could have been done is easy (and superficial, I would say) in hindsight; those who jumped on the bandwagon had to dance to the tune of the funding agencies so that we could have what we have today.

However, it is not only the funding policies that shape sociolinguistic research. If sociolinguistics is the field of linguistics that studies the relationship between language and society, changes in society lead to changes in language in the direction to what Bell (2016) has called the third wave. Despite that, changes in language do not always lead to societal changes. The sociolinguistic approach based on stratified and standardized databases leads to the description of a variety of certain languages that are assumed to be the standard. The standard, of both stratification of language and stratification of society, is assumed to have a perspective that hierarchizes varieties: capital vs. countryside and southeast vs. northeast. Sociolinguistic activism can contest this hierarchy. This is what Anne Charity-Hudley (2013) proposes.

3 WAVES OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC ACTIVISM

Boosted by younger women who use the Internet and social media to contest gender inequality, the fourth wave of the feminist movement is characterized by the incredulity about the fact that certain attitudes continue to exist (WRYE, 2009). Despite all the advances in the promotion of equity, women suffer from maninterrupting, when a man constantly interrupts a woman in an unnecessary way, not even allowing her to finish her. This sentence – and even if they are not called that – is what Barrozo and Aguilera (2014) point out, for example, in the silencing of speeches by Minister Rosa Weber at the Brazilian Supreme Court.

The fourth wave of feminism reverberates in a way in the sociolinguistic activism proposed by Anne Charity-Hudley.

Charity-Hudley (2013) takes up the premise of social justice, widely discussed in sociolinguistics, and formulated in terms of principles, such as the principle of linguistic gratuity (WOLFRAM, 1998; WOLFRAM; REASER; VAUGHN, 2008), in which language documentation actions mobilize data collected from community members in collaboration with the university and community associations. That is, researchers and community association members participate together in interviews, formulate questions, carry out documentation, recruit participants. Data collection for language documentation is the basis of the principle of debt (LABOV, 1982): the products of sociolinguistic documentation should be available to the community. Sociolinguistic documentation must serve the community by documenting local history and providing a source for research and education. In addition, the principle of linguistic and non-linguistic service, proposed by Rickford (1997), in which the researcher volunteers in non-linguistic activities in collaboration with the research, forming a long-term bond with the community. However, even pedagogical feedback or the insertion of research into the school (REASER; ADGER, 2007; BUCHOLTZ, 2014) are social justice actions debited to the set-up of sociolinguistic studies.

Charity-Hudley (2013) argues that sociolinguistic models could reflect a social justice paradigm if they were co-constructed by linguists and communities so that one learns from the other. As long as sociolinguistic researchers limit themselves to describing the community and producing their articles, books, and courses, their return to the community will be very low. For greater reach and for the social justice effectiveness of sociolinguistic research, Charity-Hudley (2013) advocates the necessity of knowledge dissemination plans within the community.

However, if sociolinguistics advocates and defends the principles of social justice, why have they not been applied yet? This is where the waves come from Charity-Hudley's (2013) perspective.

The first wave, identifying problems and building theories, aims to map research problems, bring them into mainstream academia, and test them using quantitative and qualitative approaches. As a result, we recognize that all language varieties, both spoken and written, are equal. In the second wave, identifying applications and extending theories—quantitative and qualitative analysis of situated language uses in contexts of application—is prevalent. As a result, we have sociolinguistic variables that explain the differences in linguistic behavior between groups and the issues of school failure, for example. The third wave is characterized by direct sociolinguistic training actions by training sociolinguistic researchers within the community and sensitizing the community to sociolinguistic issues. The fourth wave is the wave of dissemination programs, providing access to linguistically excluded groups (“popular norm” speakers, language contact between varieties). The change of perspective leads the representatives of minority language groups to rise to researcher status and the funding of research projects to be developed by the community itself.

At the foundation of the fourth wave that Anne Charity-Hudley, a Black American sociolinguist, proposes is an issue that, even there, is delicate: the relationship between race and language. Together with Christine Mallinson and Mary Bucholtz (2020), she signs a manifesto in favor of the engagement of linguists with different methodological approaches and racial backgrounds. While the standard language variety is described as an unmarked norm, Charity-Hudley (2016) reminds us that in the U.S., language varieties are described according to race, such as African-American English or Chicano English. Many North American sociolinguistic studies assume the category of race or ethnicity, and the categorization of race of participants in language documentation occurs through identification, self-identification, or a combination of both. However, Charity-Hudley (2016)

points out that the categories are decided before the linguistic analysis has even begun, and sometimes racialized bias is defined by the researcher, not the phenomenon or the approach.¹

In the context of a raciolinguistic agenda (ROSA; FLORES, 2017), the fourth wave, promoted by Charity-Hudley (2016), emphasizes the differences between what one learns about a language and/or racial group by studying it and what one learns by living the experience. In this paradigm, both linguistic and racial ideologies are co-constructed and negotiated between researchers and the community, highlighting what people, race, and/or culture appreciate and regard as crucial to language research as well as to the social justice promoted by sociolinguistics.

Thus, sociolinguistic activism is not a movement against linguistic prejudice because linguistic prejudice is a result of the process of choosing one variety as the standard. Movements against linguistic prejudice are results, even when indirect, of methodological decisions that may be characterized as both a romantic and naïve perspective that people will stop being prejudiced, or in a more maleficent perspective, simply saying that it is not wrong speaking in either way (not presenting, however, the opportunity to realize a value scale, be aware of their own variety). Following the same perspective of resignification, a fourth wave of sociolinguistic activism involves an active stance of sociolinguistic scholars in mobilizing the results of their studies to be used in teaching and in dissemination materials and in supporting the recognition and valorization of varieties.

The most revolutionary aspect of the fourth wave is the protagonism in the research agenda and community engagement, as Charity-Hudley (2016) argues. While in U.S. sociolinguistics, the racial issue has been considered a category of analysis since the first studies, in Brazil, education was assumed to be the synthesizing category of social and racial asymmetries. Historically, the black population has had less access to educational and economic resources and opportunities, resulting in persistent inequality. As a result, the majority of the low-income and less educated population comprises black people. These inequalities are also reflected in labor opportunities and, by extension, in social classes. The relationship between race, social class, and education is therefore complex and interconnected, and education, measured in years in school or level of schooling, is one category of stratification whose metric is objective. Hence, explanations or interpretations of the results of sociolinguistic studies that adopt the educational level metric usually extrapolate to the relationship between race and the social class that the construct subsumes.

This does not mean that racial issues have not been considered in Brazilian sociolinguistic studies; there is a body of studies that aim to uncover Afro-Brazilian Portuguese (PETTER, 2009; LUCCHESI; BAXTER; RIBEIRO, 2009, among others), which look for the Creole origins of Brazilian Portuguese, with an approach focused on the contrastive description of the effects of contacts in rural communities or those in the inner-cities. The subjection of racial effects in urban speech, in large cities and city centers, can also be observed in approaches that contrast educated speech vs. popular speech (LUCCHESI, 2015), in which issues of class and race are subsumed by the contrast between more educated and less educated. Indeed, few studies address racial issues as central to the sociolinguistic explanation of the ways in which an urban variety of language is organized in Brazil; Cerqueira (2020) makes this proposition, not as a study of opposition, but as a study of a variety with its own legitimate operation, indexed to a socially representative group.²

However, in Brazil, there is still another complex relationship underwritten by educational level and social class, the region of origin. Historically, the Northeastern region has had lower rates of school attendance and economic development, which affects the social mobility of its population. At the same time, most of the black population is concentrated in this region. The intersectionality

¹ A process very close to what sometimes happens with the approach of gender in Brazilian sociolinguistic studies (FREITAG, 2015), in which the classification of people is made by those who are carrying out the research, aprioristically, and based on physical clues of gender expression.

² Subsequently, in a more explicit position, Cerqueira (2022) claims credit for Lélia Gonzalez on the evidence of “amefricanity”, “the presence of linguistic marks of African languages in the new version of the target language, or the contact language” (CERQUEIRA, 2022, p. 17), which she named “pretoguês”. “However, until 2020, 37 years after the publication, there was no crediting and referencing of its theoretical formulation in the linguistic tradition.” (CERQUEIRA, 2022, p. 19). In addition to claiming recognition, Fernanda Cerqueira, “black, cisgender, heterosexual, feminist, northeastern, and working-class woman” (CERQUEIRA, 2022, p. 28), advocates: “Not by chance, I found, painfully, that this erasure is directly related to the fact that, just as my meeting with Lélia Gonzalez was delayed by ten years, so was it with many other black scholars, inside and outside linguistics.” Fernanda Cerqueira is undoubtedly a fourth wave sociolinguist as we are going to see in the next section.

between race and region of origin is a decisive factor in social mobility, with the rise of educational opportunities, but also with the rise of spaces of power to make agendas - in the case of sociolinguistics - that value their community.

4 THE FOURTH WAVE

For several decades, higher education in Brazil was a privilege and paradox: students who had spent their whole school years in public schools only had admission to private colleges, while those from private schools had access to public universities. In addition, courses in public higher education, until recently, were mostly offered during the day and in state capitals, which restricted the possibilities of social ascension through education for people without financial resources. Although education is not equivalent to professional success, the probability of having well-paid jobs is associated with higher education (NONATO et al., 2012). After decades of dictatorial and neoliberal governance, the first government of President Lula assumed the role of the state as an inducer of public policies at the educational level (PEREIRA; SILVA, 2010; CARVALHO, 2014).

Public policies, such as the Expansion with Interiorization of Public Universities program (*Expansão com Interiorização de Universidade Pública* - EXPANDIR), created in 2005, and the program to support plans for the Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities (*Reestruturação e Expansão das Universidades Federais* - REUNI), were implemented to reduce asymmetries, specially regional and spatial inequalities in the provision of public higher education in Brazil. The EXPANDIR and REUNI programs led to the creation of 18 new federal universities, six of which were in the northeastern region, in addition to 182 university campuses (*A democratização e expansão da educação superior no país 2003–2014* report, 2015). The landscape of public higher education in the northeastern region of Brazil changed significantly between 2003 and 2010, with public policies for the expansion and internalization of public universities, leading not only to an increase in enrollments in higher education but also to the internalization of public higher education, contributing to the elimination of regional and spatial inequalities.

Figure 1, with data provided by the 2019 Higher Education Census (MEC/INEP), presents the evolution of higher education enrollment between 1980 and 2019. Brazil's public higher education system has expanded, both spatially and quantitatively. In the upper part of figure 1, the maps allow for a comparison between the number of cities where there were public university campuses before REUNI and EXPANDIR (left) and in the last Higher Education Census report (right). The evolution in the number of enrollments is presented in the lower part of figure 1.

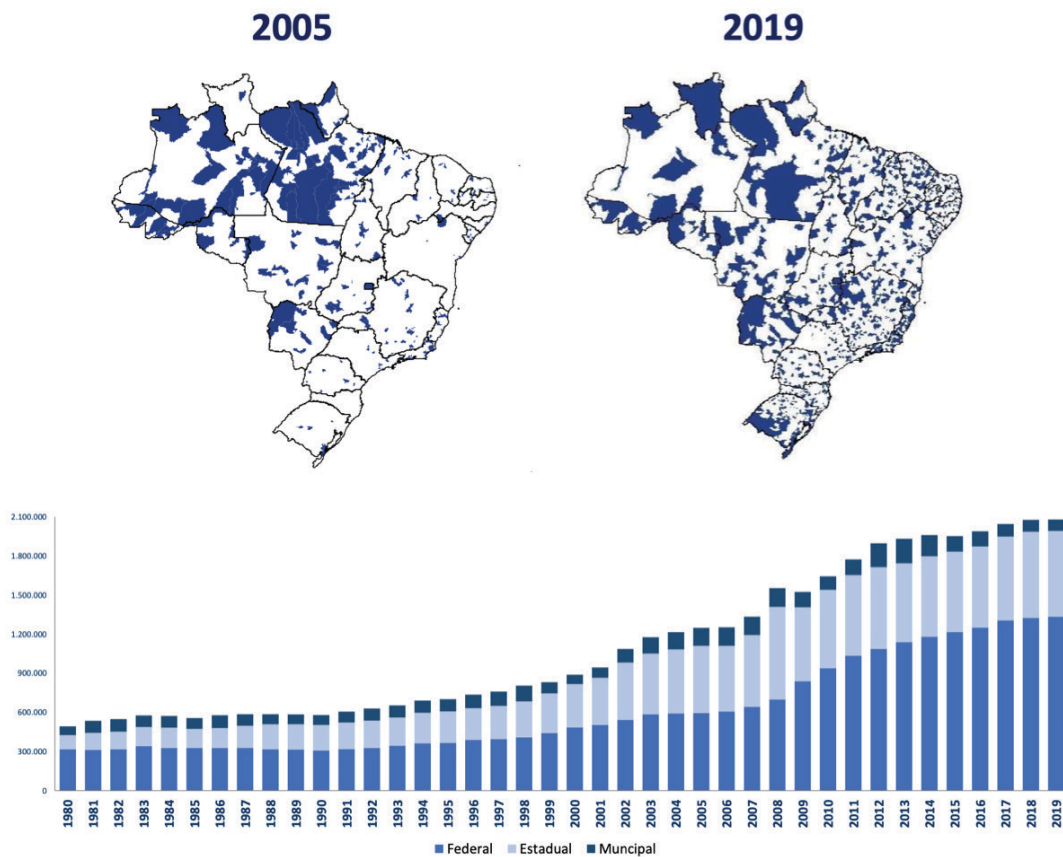


Figure 1: Expansion of higher education in Brazil

Source: the autor

In addition to the expansion of admission to higher education courses, the implementation of the Unified Selection System (*Sistema de Seleção Unificada* - SiSU) and quota laws have allowed for the expansion of regional, cultural and ethnic racial diversity in Brazilian higher education institutions.

The practical effects of student mobility are a multiplicity of social profiles within universities, students from rural and urban areas of various states of Brazil, and students from different socioeconomic classes in the same living space, sharing regional, cultural, and linguistic practices. In addition, a new profile of undergraduate students began to attend higher education: young people from the lower class that studied in public schools, but only after the implementation of new educational policies did they enroll in public universities. This change brought about linguistic contact and conflict.

The linguistic impacts of expansion in higher education affect both academic organization and performance; difficulties in reading and writing are pointed out as recurrent problems by Brazilian undergraduates. This difficulty has become more accentuated with the recent democratization of access to higher education and the admission of a new undergraduate profile, formed by those who had until then the admission to the university denied, such as young people from public schools and low-income, and who only after the creation of the most recent policies began to have the possibility of admission, who are known as “new student” (BRITTO et al., 2008). Enrolled mostly in evening courses, these students end up being subjected to the pressures of the job market, given the difficulty of staying in a daytime course, as they have to work. A higher education degree is characterized by the possibility of ascension to mid-level job positions. Meanwhile, the classic student, the one who has historically enrolled in public universities, because they have a family and social structure that supports them, find in academic life a way to maintain social status, usually in daytime and taking more prestigious courses.

The changes that have occurred in federal public universities have not only interfered with the social structure of academic communities and the neighborhoods in which they are located; they have also interfered with language. Due to the access of socially disadvantaged classes and academic mobility to students from different geographical regions, each student carries typical values, cultures, norms, ways of speaking, repertoires, and linguistic features of their place of origin. In a social space such as a university, this diversity of forms converges to language change, following all the changes that occur in the social environment and establishing a landscape of linguistic conflict. Often, professors say that the new undergraduate is not skilled in reading and writing, and the undergraduates themselves recognize that their difficulties affect their performance in classes and assessments (ANDRADE, 2020). Could this be an effect of linguistic differences, as pointed out by Labov (1972) in *Language in the Inner City*? Can these differences be claimed as evidence that Brazilian Portuguese has become a pluricentric language with different patterns accelerated by the expansion of higher education? What other agendas become important for sociolinguistic research, not in the opposition between a standard vs. varieties, but in patterns, plural? Two cases are presented below.

4.1 THE NEW LANGUAGE PATTERN

The first sociolinguistic investigation of Brazilian Portuguese in the 1980s revealed trends in morphosyntactic change, suggesting a continuous direction of change culminating in implantation. For example, in pronouns (PAIVA; SCHERRE, 1999), the distributional results of the variants pointed to the replacement of *nós* by *a gente* in the first-person plural expression, *seu* by *dele* in the third-person, and the mandatory filling of the preverbal subject (DUARTE, 1996), among others. The predictive power of the variationist model has even driven the prescription of these trends in contemporary prescriptive grammars of the Brazilian variety of Portuguese; this is the case of Bagno (2012, p. 770), who claims “Possessives referring to the non-person in spoken language are always *dele / dela / deles / delas*”.

However, changes in the space where the pattern is configured, the university, have shown that predictions do not always materialize. In a study on the variation in third-person possessive pronouns (FREITAG; SIQUEIRA, 2018), based on a sample of sociolinguistic interviews with undergraduates, the distribution was 51.3% for *dele* and 48.7% for *seu*, similar to the findings of a study on the NURC corpus (MÜLLER, 1997), 55.8% and 44.2%, respectively. On the other hand, in first-person plural pronouns, *a gente* is systematically more productive, and the pattern of agreement with *-mos* has increased (FREITAG, 2016b).

Although it is not documentation in accordance with sociolinguistic proposals, the corpus of the Norma Urbana Culta (NURC) project has been used for sociolinguistic studies. Covering the largest Brazilian cities - São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Porto Alegre, Salvador, and Recife—the NURC corpus has over 400 hours of recordings in different speech genres of what was considered the educated speaker (with a higher education degree, in state capitals), collected in the 1960s-1970s. Recently, the Recife sample was digitalized (OLIVEIRA Jr., 2016). NURC corpus is the basis of contemporary grammar in Brazilian Portuguese (CASTILHO, 2010).

In the Brazilian sociolinguistic context, NURC's corpus enables real-time study of linguistic change, especially the effect of the expansion of higher education to include historically constituted social groups, which shape new standards and evidence of the pluricentric nature of Brazilian Portuguese. *The language of the university* is an incoming project at the Federal University of Sergipe, building a corpus and describing the usage patterns are two of the main objectives of the project.

This project was initially oriented to the demands of linguistic asymmetry identified by students' self-assessment, professors' testimonials, and the outcomes of large-scale assessments, such as ENADE (ANDRADE, 2020; ANDRADE; FREITAG, 2021). Through a pedagogical support program (Call 02/2029/PROGRAD/PROEST/UFS), the project *A língua da universidade* required the linguistic documentation of the undergraduate students at the Federal University of Sergipe to provide a sample for the description of the effective patterns of linguistic usage, in articulation with the project *Falares Sergipanos virtual: variety, diversity, contact, and linguistic rights* (Call 02/2015 SENACON/MJ; Call CAPES/FAPITEC/SE 10/2016 PROMOB).





Deslocamento I	Deslocamento II	Deslocamento III	Deslocamento IV
Nascido e residente em Aracaju e região metropolitana, vai e volta para a UFS diariamente (pendular capital)	Sergipano, do interior, vai e volta para a UFS diariamente (pendular interior)	Sergipano, do interior, migrou temporariamente para o entorno da UFS (sazonal, interna)	De outros estados, migrou temporariamente para o entorno da UFS (sazonal, externa)
			

Figure 2: Stratification of Displacement sample

The new shape of higher education has led to the adaptation of the linguistic documentation protocol used for project A língua da universidade, with some differences compared to the classic approach to collecting sociolinguistic data. Instead of the notion of "speech community" (a group of people who share a set of expectations and attitudes concerning language use), this language documentation assumes a broad concept of "community of practice" (a group of people involved in social practices, but who do not necessarily share linguistic patterns). The territorial/geographical dimension was then an important feature in the recruitment and selection of participants for the sample.

Named Displacements (Deslocamentos) sample, this sociolinguistic documentation approach integrates the Falares Sergipanos database (FREITAG, 2013) and assumes an expanded concept for the community of practices that combines both stable and fluid sociodemographic categorization, such as sex/gender, age, where one lives, and vulnerability, with the conduction of sociolinguistic interviews in which participants are recruited in their social practices at the university.

Interrupted by the pandemic, the project's linguistic documentation series consisted of the first sample (2018) and the second sample (2019), stratified by displacement (figure 2) and time of course.

In the original proposal for pedagogical support, the results of the grammatical pattern were intended to subsidize academic reading and writing courses, and at the same time, to raise awareness of linguistic differences, which should be recognized as a baseline for propositional actions related to academic retention and dropout at the university.

The results show grammatical differences according to the type of displacement and region of origin, such as the distribution of the definite article before possessive pronouns (SIQUEIRA, 2020a,b; SIQUEIRA; FREITAG, 2022), the variation in the realization of the locative preposition *in ~ ni* (RIBEIRO, 2021), 2nd person personal pronouns in the function of subject *você ~ cê*, and object, *te ~ lhe*, and preposition of the locative complement of verbs of movement *a ~ pra ~ em* (SIQUEIRA; SOUSA, RODRIGUES, 2023). However, the results also pointed to the normative effect of the community of practices, measured by the time spent in the group: the longer the time in the course, the greater the tendency to align with the standard; this is what happens with the locative preposition *em*, replacing *ni*, predominating in the speech of undergraduate beginners (RIBEIRO, 2021), the use of *seu* instead of *dele* (NOVAIS; SIQUEIRA, RODRIGUES, 2021), redundant agreement in place of non-redundant (NOVAIS, 2021), the presence vs. absence of determiner before possessive (SIQUEIRA, 2020), or preposition *a* vs. *em* in the locative complements of movement verbs (RODRIGUES, 2021), and, at the phonological level, the palatal variant replacing the alveolar stop variant in the segments /t/ and /d/ before /i/ (CORRÊA, 2019) and the effect of the dialectal region on the difference in the acoustic values (SILVA, 2021).

A third pattern identified, going into the domain of awareness of the standard, is the denial of behavior in conformity with an imposed normative standard, as evidenced by the expression of the first-person plural, in which the behavior is almost categorical regarding the use of *a gente*, but at the level of consciousness, people claim to use the variant *nós* (FREITAG, 2016b).

The continuity of the linguistic documentation, together with the further description of the patterns of use at different language levels, can contribute to the understanding of how the patterns work and the effects of grammatical prescriptions on the conformation of linguistic standards, just as the observation of the dynamics of the language can reveal the effect of social dynamics, reinforcing the ideology of social ascension through education, which reinforces segregation: instead of a change in the language towards more diverse and identity standards, the university space reinforces the prescriptivist effect and curbs change. In other words, the new educated standard is not so new.

4.2 NON-BINARY GENDER

Identitarian agendas have brought about changes in Brazilian society that are also manifested at the linguistic level, such as the movements for plain language, which aim to democratize access to information for citizenship (BATISTA; FREITAG, 2022), and inclusive language or neutral language movements, which aim for equality, inclusion, and diversity in reference to gender, respecting identity, and promoting non-invisibilization.

Whether from the perspective of inclusive gender or neutral gender, this discussion has gained ground not only in academic research but also in educational policies. In the context of affirmative policies for the expansion of higher education, groups that were left out of undergraduate programs were included in graduate programs such as transgender people (VENTURINI; FERES Jr, 2020). This does not mean that there is a direct association between transgender and research on inclusive or neutral language issues but that the positive diversity generated by inclusion makes gender prominent. It is not by chance that empirical research on the subject is concentrated on a bubble, educated, and with access to social networks.

The demand for an inclusive language is not recent. There is even a federal draft law (4610/2001) waiting to be put on the table for an ordinary ballot, which concerns gender-inclusive language in official documents. The inclusion of gender in official communication is also not new; even in the 1980s, President José Sarney used to greet “Brasileiras e Brasileiros” in his pronouncements. Perhaps what is new is the emergence of a linguistic form to refer to those who do not identify with the binary, such as the form “todes”.

In Brazilian Portuguese, linguistic marks for the expression of non-binary gender have been regularly and systematically described, especially in gender agreement systems and the pronominal paradigm (MADER; SEVERO, 2016; SCHWINDT, 2020; PINHEIRO; PINHEIRO, 2021; FREITAG, 2022, among others). In addition to a redundant gender rule (as opposed to the generic masculine), the emergence of forms with morphemic behavior to the expression of non-binary gender (@, x, e), as well as the emergence of third-person pronouns (*êlu*, *êla*), and the prevalence of gender marking through determiner inflection, asymmetrical with the nucleus (*a Pablllo* vs. *o Pablllo*), were identified.

From a sociolinguistic approach, the emergence of new forms in the language system, as well as the change of rules, requires a description of uses from the perspective of: 1) production, whose results may reveal the groups that are driving this linguistic change, as well as the regularization in the system; 2) perception, whose results may reveal the stance of the speakers of the language about these new forms in the system; and 3) societal, which may reveal the linguistic ideology underlying the institutional manifestations of the emergence of the forms and their use.

In the current state of the process of change, at this moment, empirically, with authentic data, the clues to the unveiling of the process are more of an indirect nature, dealing with perception and societal evaluation, rather than necessarily production (cf. PINHEIRO; FREITAG, 2020; PEREIRA; SILVA, 2023). From the sociolinguistic repertoire to which I have access, Baldez (2022) presents the results of the productivity of forms in situations of real use, although restricted to Twitter.

Although the social groups that take up the new gender forms are minorities and still strongly in line with the movements that trigger the changes, the societal effects are amplified, with a strong negative and prescriptive reaction against the emerging forms, not only of neutral gender but also of inclusive gender. On the other hand, a profusion of manuals and textbooks emerges teaching and prescribing neutral language, in some cases as prescriptivists as the grammatical precepts named by Faraco (2008) as “short standard”.

These results reflect the clash between identity and the conservative trend that has prevailed in society; they also point to the need to propose actions of linguistic awareness and education in Brazilian society, as proposed by Lau (2017). However, linguistic education and awareness-raising actions require scientific support with empirical evidence.

5 DIRECTIONS

In these waves of resignification, perhaps what I am calling the fourth wave, the wave of activism, is really just sociolinguistics in which the relations between language and society are mutually constitutive. As I said at the beginning, hindsight is a privilege that allows us to look beyond. Perhaps, it is just an awakening to what was always foreseen in foundational principles. Indeed, after the university opened up to a socially diverse public, research topics in Brazilian sociolinguistics have become slightly more socially diverse, in a non-hegemony. This diversity is, to some extent, the effect of attending to demands, such as the pedagogical ones that motivated the Displacements data collection, and goes against the availability of funding, centered on priorities and technologies.³

The use of education and science to promote social justice is one of the principles guiding Brazilian public universities. In a country with so many asymmetries and where education is still the possibility of social mobility, the university is an institution that can promote revolutions, also in the direction of the sociolinguistic research agenda, breaking hegemony.

Nem sempre nossas vontades se reverberam em dados; a mudança nos padrões pela ascensão do novo perfil de estudante na universidade ou regularização da referência a gênero não-binário são demandas que, neste momento, ainda não se materializam na língua. Ou, ao menos, as evidências empíricas coletadas até o momento não suportam as hipóteses pautadas nos movimentos identitários e inclusivistas. A conjuntura requer mais pesquisa e continuidade das ações de difusão, igualmente importantes.

Activists and responsible sociolinguists, move forward!

³ The approach to language diversity has been emphasized in official documents, such as the values underlying language practices and the social role of the school in the context of linguistic heterogeneity. In the BNCC, language is conceived as dynamic and multimodal and cannot be dissociated from the social context and sense of belonging. Thus, linguistic diversity is promoted as a learning right (cf., FREITAG; SAVEDRA, 2023).

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Received on March 3, 2023. Approved on June 23, 2023.