

## Forms of address and the Portuguese presence in Santos, Brazil

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**Abstract.** The city of Santos in Brazil is the only area in the state of São Paulo where the form of address *tu* is found (Modesto 2006). The contact between Brazilians of European descent and Portuguese immigrants, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is a possible cause of this phenomenon (Pereira & Frutuoso 2007). The literature on language contact highlights three important social variables which may lead to linguistic change. The first of these variables, as stated by Ravindranath (2015), is related to demography. The city of Santos became home to many Portuguese immigrants back in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second variable is space and mobility (Britain 2013). Due to sanitary reforms (Mello 2007), the city of Santos had its urban mobility and spatial arrangement transformed, and this reshaped how the Brazilian and the Portuguese immigrants would move around the city. The last social variable is described by Dodsworth (2017) as the social role of individuals within a community. In Santos, the Portuguese immigrants had important roles in labor unions and helped to organize many of the harbor workers (Maram 1979). These factors converged to create a "solidary" scenario in Santos, which may have favored the use of more solidary forms of address where interlocutors could engage on more equal terms (see Brown & Gilman 1960) such as *tu*. In order to verify how the forms of address were used by Portuguese immigrants in the state of São Paulo in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 114 personal letters (Museu de Imigração de São Paulo 2019) were analyzed. Those immigrants who lived by the coast presented a higher use of *tu* in relationships among peers. In Santos, linguistic and social variables seem to have favored the use of *tu* and its usage persists today.

**Keywords.** historical linguistics; Santos; forms of address; linguistic contact; solidarity

**1. Introduction.** The forms of address in Brazilian Portuguese have already been researched in several linguistic studies. Lopes et al. (2018a, 2018b) show us that the use of *você* and *tu* may vary across Brazil. For Lopes et al. (2018a, 2018b), *você* is commonly used in the Southeast region of the country, in the state of Paraná, and in the city of Salvador (in the state of Bahia). *Tu* is frequently used in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in the south region of the country, and in the North region in general. Some other states, however, present frequent use of *tu*, but with no second person singular conjugation: for instance, instead of *tu vais* ('you go'), it is common to hear *tu vai*. In some parts of the North and the Northeast of Brazil, it is possible to find *você* and *tu* coexisting.

The state of São Paulo, in the Brazilian southeast, is known for having *você* as the main form of address between people. The only exception to this rule is observed in the city of Santos, as pointed out by Modesto (2006). In twenty sociolinguistic interviews, the author (Modesto 2006:81) registered 476 occurrences of *você* (67%) and 232 of *tu* (33%). According to Modesto (2006:84), *tu* is more frequently observed in speakers with a lower level of education. For Modesto (2006:92-93), there are two important considerations as a result of his

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investigation: the first is that “*você* will probably not leave Santos’s linguistic repertoire so soon” and secondly, *tu* is more observed among young people in informal contexts of communication. Modesto (2006) also highlights that, in his sociolinguistic interviews, *tu* presented no second person singular verb conjugations.

A traditional newspaper from Santos, the *Novo Milênio*, had already made some remarks regarding the use of *tu* in the city. As stated by one of its writers, Guidi (1985), the use of *tu* as a form of address in the coastal city was a result of the high demography of Portuguese immigrants that came to the city in the last two centuries. Still according to him, these immigrants would use *tu* to address each other more frequently than those who already lived in Santos prior to the immigration waves.

A classic study on forms of address was carried out by Brown and Gilman (1960). For the authors (Brown & Gilman 1960:252), forms of address vary according to "the objective relationship between the interlocutors": T (*tu*) would be used for intimacy, whereas V (*vos*) would be employed in more formal situations. The relationship between two speakers may also be reflected in one’s choice of forms of address when interacting. Here, “power” plays a major role when individuals select how to address one another. There are two types of power dynamics in a relationship between two speakers: symmetric or asymmetric ones. The latter would be seen, for example, when you have an employee talking to an employer, or even a son or daughter talking to a parent. This power relationship is characterized by a person in a higher position of power talking to a person in a lower position. The former context is when two people are in equal positions of power, such as siblings writing to each other (Brown & Gilman 1960:257).

The relationship between two people is also connected to the social context where an interaction takes place. One factor related to the social sphere is known as “domain of use”, pointed out by Ravindranath (2015:247) as the context in which “communication takes place”. More specifically, it deals with the language variety that is being spoken, who is using it, and who is the listener. Domains of use may be found in the playground, at schools, churches, in literature, in the press, in the armed forces, in the courts, and in the government system. To this end, Ravindranath (2015:248) advocates that a "more ethnographic approach, based on anthropological practices, avoiding preconceived social categories and, instead, using regional categories that are more meaningful once the researcher is more familiar with the community" should take place in variationist studies. A speaker may be more or less associated with a certain type of domain of use, which may imply greater or lesser use of a given variety of speech/language. Thus, analyzing the social network in which speakers find themselves can help to better understand their speech behavior and how language variation and change may take place.

As speakers have different roles within a community, Dodsworth (2017:342-343) asserts that it is important to verify “in which ways the position of an individual in the structure of a community influences its adoption of new “dialectal forms”. The role of individual identities is the main subject of study of the third wave in sociolinguistics (as posed by Penelope Eckert in many of her works). It is a significant approach for understanding linguistic variation. Due to immigration and globalization, verifying how local and global identities are established is important to understand the outcomes of linguistic contact.

Lastly, urban space, urban mobility, and spatial arrangement within a community must be taken into account. Britain (2013:475) highlights that “dialectal geographers were busy quantifying geometric space, devoid of its social content, while urban sociolinguists studied their speech communities with little attention to integrations with larger socio-spatial structures”. The author mentions different ways to approach a community’s “space”, going beyond its physical territory.

Demography, the roles people perform within communities, and the urban space arrangement are the characteristics I will look into when studying the city of Santos and its connection to immigration in the past. These features may help to explain how linguistic contact in this coastal city may have led its inhabitants to use specific forms of address. My hypothesis is that these social factors acted as catalysts for the formation of a solidary community. If that is the case, the community in Santos could be considered a Community of Practice. According to Eckert and Wenger (2005:582), “communities of practice are a good locus to study how power is organized and exercised in linguistic practices of the day to day”. Eckert and Wenger (2005) defend that hierarchies should not always be considered as linear structures. Power is exercised in different ways and those relationships may reflect on language use. As Eckert and Wenger (2005:583) emphasize, "practice" and "activity" are not the same thing; in other words, we cannot regard an individual who carries out certain activities as automatically being a member of a community characterized by that very task. A "practice" is a "way of doing things, founded on and shared by a community" (Eckert & Wenger 2005:583). The distinction between these two points is necessary to better understand what "legitimacy" is within a hierarchy: developing an activity characterized as a community practice is different from being at a certain level within that community that decides what should be part of its activities or not; this is legitimacy (Eckert & Wenger 2005:583).

Before checking for the significance of demography, community roles, and urban space and mobility as sociolinguistic variables in Santos, it is necessary to establish language usage patterns: how were forms of address used by these immigrants on the coast? This may help verify whether any of these variables played an important part in this language contact context.

**2. Forms of address in the past.** It is important to remember, just as highlighted by Benmamoun et al. (2013:162), that the availability of "pragmatically-conditioned functions" differs from language to language. As Fernández-Mallat and Newman (2022) remind us, forms of address vary within a language. In Spanish, for instance, each dialect may present a pragmatic view on how each form of address shall be employed. The same goes for varieties of Portuguese. In Santos, the Portuguese immigrants come mostly from the north of Portugal. Most of them had low formal education, but were well-versed in the organization of labor unions. Fernández-Mallat and Newman (2022:247) also point out that "Latin America lacks the highly elaborate caste system", which would bring all Portuguese immigrants to "a common ground" when it comes to social distance.

To check how the forms of address were used by the Portuguese immigrants in the state of São Paulo back then, I analyzed 114 letters from Portuguese immigrants living in the state of São Paulo (from 1890 to 1920). These missives are available in the digital collection of the São Paulo Immigration Museum (2019). In the sample of personal letters, I separated letter writers according to their place of residence (capital city, countryside, or the coast) and the hierarchy between interlocutors. If a son or daughter is writing to a parent, we have a “superior hierarchy” situation, as the addressee is in a higher position of power. If one sibling is writing to another, for example, we have an “equal hierarchy”. Table 1 shows the number of occurrences for each form of address in these letters.

Place of residence Forms of address	Capital (50 letters)	Countryside (50 letters)	Coast (14 letters)	TOTAL
<b>Superior hierarchy</b>	<b>71 occurrences</b>	<b>75 occurrences</b>	<b>21 occurrences</b>	<b>167</b>
<i>Tu</i>	4 (6%)	7 (10%)	4 (19%)	15
Sir/Madam	24 (34%)	31 (41%)	8 (38%)	63
Noun phrase	41 (57%)	34 (45%)	8 (38%)	83
<i>Vós</i>	2 (3%)	3 (4%)	1 (5%)	6
<b>Equal Hierarchy</b>	<b>34 occurrences</b>	<b>4 occurrences</b>	<b>24 occurrences</b>	<b>62</b>
<i>Tu</i>	19 (56%)	1 (25%)	16 (67%)	36
Sir/Madam	2 (6%)	2 (50%)	6 (25%)	10
Noun phrase	13 (38%)	1 (25%)	2 (8%)	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>229</b>

Table 1. Occurrences of *tu* and third person forms of address according to hierarchy and the region where immigrants lived in the state of São Paulo

The number of personal letters for the Portuguese immigrants by the coast is smaller than for those living in the capital city of the state, São Paulo, or those living in its countryside. Yet, as we can see in the total percentages for each form of address, the second grammatical person *tu* is the least used in the three regions of the state for asymmetric power relationships. When I only analyze the data for symmetrical relationships between interlocutors, *tu* is the most used form of address in the capital and by the coast. The social history of the state of São Paulo helps to better understand this division, as the Portuguese immigrants in each of these areas held distinct occupations. I will look into this further ahead.

It is also important to remember that *tu* is a second person singular form of address, which has a verb conjugation: *tu vais* ('you go'). *Tu* may also be dropped (as a pro-drop pronoun) in a sentence if the verb conjugation is present. Modesto (2006) pointed out that the *tu* used in Santos in present times has no verb inflection at all. Duarte (1995) shows us that the pro-drop phenomenon in Brazilian Portuguese decreases over the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the insertion of *você*, derived from the form of address *vossa mercê*, changes the verbal paradigm of the language in that pronouns must be present in the sentence structure in order to make subjects clear. Hence, pro-drop occurrences are more likely to be found in European Portuguese instead of Brazilian Portuguese. In this case, it seems that *tu* has been borrowed by the Brazilians, who did not conjugate the verbs. The next section will shed some light on how this borrowing took place.

**2. Linguistic variation and the social history of Santos.** The first strong indicator that the contact between the Portuguese immigrants and those who lived in Santos prior to their arrival would have favored the spread of *tu* is the city demography. The city had around 15,000 inhabitants in 1886. This number grew to more than 50,000 people by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1913, 44% of the almost 89,000 inhabitants were immigrants, with 23,000 of them being Portuguese immigrants, and with almost 10,000 others coming from Spain (Pereira & Frutuoso 2007).

With large numbers of immigrants, linguistic contact between them and the other inhabitants of the city could not be avoided, and the urbanization of Santos helps to show that. The urban growth of Santos is illustrated on the map in Figure 1 (which was created using the Google Maps website, and was based on the information gathered from different studies presented ahead):



Figure 1. Urban expansion of Santos in the beginning of the 20th century

The red area on the map in Figure 1 corresponds to the Port of Santos, a very important port for passengers and different sorts of goods until today. This region was also under the control of the “Companhia das Docas” (“Docas Company”), the company in charge of running the city’s port. This company was also responsible for urban works in the city. The numbers of each of the remaining areas in Figure 1 represent the order in which each territory was occupied. Area 1 represents the City Center, with a strong presence of immigrants and other laborers who worked at the port. The green region (Area 2) corresponds to the hills in Santos. The yellow area (Area 3) is where, according to Carreira (2018:10), the neighborhoods of “Vila Mathias” and “Vila Macuco” were created. Both regions were home to port workers as well. Areas 4 and 5 were created in 1920, housing more people who worked at the docks.

Historical data analyzed by Gitahy (1992) show that the City Center (Area 1 in Figure 1) had dwellings where the Portuguese immigrants and the Brazilian lived together, with approximately 10 people living in each of these houses. During the first changes to the city’s streets and sewers system, these houses were demolished and many workers had to find new homes in the hills (Area 2 in Figure 1). Silva and Gitahy (1996) describe this period of time as one characterized by “construction fever”, which would change the city’s urban layout. In 1872, there were 1,407 buildings in Santos. By 1910, more than 10,500 new buildings and houses had been already established in the city.

As stated by Mello (2008:27), the wealthy Brazilians who lived in Santos moved south at the end of the 19th century (Area 3 in Figure 1), meaning Santos’s inhabitants were now spread all over its territory. Some of the port workers were close to the city’s harbor, while others were living in the hills. Moreover, the previous inhabitants of the city had moved to the south of the city. This spatial mobility meant new means of transportation had to be implemented, such as the streetcars. For Mello (2007:122), this also allowed life in the city to improve and grow, as the “expansion of the city towards the beaches” made it possible for “a variety of leisure activities” to become available by the end of the 19th century.

As mentioned before, Dodsworth (2017) highlights the importance of understanding one’s role within a community. Different documents from some of Santos’s parishes, in “Vila Mathias” and “Vila Macuco” were studied by Pereira (2013). Pereira (2013:265) found that “the total number of Portuguese weddings in the period 1915-1916 is 721. Endogamy is prevalent, as 524 marriages are between the Portuguese [immigrants]”. He also points out that the number of single mothers was higher for Portuguese women.

The Portuguese immigrants also made up the majority of workers in Santos’s port services and all other urban activities (Mello 2008). Pereira and Frutuoso (2007:284) made a

comparison between different fields of work and show that more than 10,000 Portuguese immigrants had worked in the port and on the railroad, whereas fewer than a thousand were found in industrial activities. The Portuguese immigrants had an important role in founding Santos's first working unions: "the working unions and associations of Santos were dominated by the leadership of Portuguese immigrants" (Pascal 2008:04). As stated by Gitahy (1992), after the creation of the working unions, strikes in different workplaces were carried out against a common organization: the "Companhia das Docas".

For Carreira (2018:32, author translation), "the tentacles of Companhia das Docas and the construction sites of Companhia Construtora de Santos, directly and indirectly, spread to the four corners of the city", mainly due to the political influence of its directors. Workers organized a labor movement in response to this far-reaching economic control, achieving a unified goal-oriented sense of community. Such unity made Santos known as the "Barcelona of Brazil" and "allowed the local movement to remain active while the movements in Rio and São Paulo [big Brazilian cities] withered" (Maram 1979:167). Of the 17 union leaders in Santos, eight were Portuguese. Other statistics highlighted by Maram (1979:25) concern another strike movement in Santos: "[a list of] names and nationalities of the 153 workers arrested during an invasion by the Santos Workers' Federation. Only 18 were not foreigners. 62 were Spanish, 58 were Portuguese". Though Spanish immigrants appear in these records, their presence in the city was not as big as the Portuguese presence: in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Frutuoso (2004) registers 21,000 thousand Portuguese immigrants in the city, against 8,600 Spanish immigrants.

The solidarity and union seen in Santos are connected by two social variables: first, practically all work activity in the city is associated with the port and commerce; second, the monopoly of the company "Companhia das Docas" throughout the city and its urban areas drove people to organize and fight for their wellbeing and for better working conditions.

The large demographic of Portuguese immigrants, the small territory where they lived, and their influence within labor movements show how united the community was back then and how their roles were very important for the city. These factors converge to a solidary community, one where the use of the form of address *tu*, taken as a solidary variant, would be able to be spread across different social groups. As discussed before, the Portuguese immigrant letters by the coast show that *tu* was widely used in Santos. The leadership role of the Portuguese and their large numbers within the working class may have favored the spreading of *tu*, and the importance of the city's port and its workers may have perpetuated the use of *tu* until today.

**3. Final remarks.** Demography, mobility, and labor unions are some of the social variables that gave the Portuguese immigrants important roles within the city of Santos. As Carreira (2018) summarized, port workers were the ones who kept the economy in Santos running smoothly in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Within this occupational group, immigrants and the previous inhabitants of the city lived and worked side by side, making room for linguistic contact to thrive. According to Brown and Gilman (1960:265), "reciprocal semantic solidarity has grown with social mobility and egalitarian ideologies". These characteristics allowed the workers movements in Santos to extend to the entire city. This sentiment spread to other workers who, Brazilian or not, benefited from the immigrants' fight and, in turn, were solidary with them.

*Tu* can be considered a heritage language variant, as the high number of marriages between immigrants and Brazilians show that this form of address would be used at home too. For Benmamoun et al. (2013:171), "heritage speakers do not develop uniform native-like competence in all grammatical domains". This leads linguists to think about linguistic contact according to isolate aspects of grammar. Yet, historical sociolinguistics aspects of language are

still our best allies in order to unveil the linguistic and social conditions which led to certain outcomes in the speakers' repertoire.

The solidary community in Santos is also a Community of Practice. The Portuguese immigrants held legitimacy, whether they worked at the port, on railways, in commerce, or had professional activities in other sectors of society. These are the first steps of a historical sociolinguistic investigation that aims to trace the cause of the spread and maintenance of the form of address *tu* in the city of Santos. It seems that working class solidarity might be the social variable that best sustains the use of this linguistic variant in the city to the present.

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