

DIALECT CONTACT IN THE CITY OF SANTOS: A STUDY OF PORTUGUESE IMMIGRANTS' PERSONAL LETTERS

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The city of Santos (Brazil) stands out as the only documented locality in the state of São Paulo where the variation between the pronouns “tu” and “você” (similar to the French “tu” and “vous”) is documented (MODESTO, 2006). Interactions between the Brazilian and the Portuguese immigrants in former times may be responsible for such a linguistic result, as Santos registered almost half of its population composed of immigrants circa 1900 (FRUTUOSO, 2004). In 130 personal letters (from 1890 to 1920) from Portuguese immigrants in Brazil (Museum of Immigration of São Paulo, 2019), the pronoun “tu” is widely used whenever interlocutors present symmetry of power in their social interactions (i. e. a conversation between siblings). "Power and solidarity" are related to interlocutors' pronoun choice in a conversation (BROWN and GILMAN, 1960). Traits of “solidarity” were observed in the linguistic contact of the Brazilian and the Portuguese in Santos (circa 1900), supported by the demography and social practices of a community (RAVINDRANATH, 2015; DODSWORTH, 2017) and its urban mobility (BRITAIN, 2013) as significant variables in the process of linguistic variation in contact situations. Mello (2007) shows that the urban expansion of Santos concentrated the immigrant workers in its central area and, as pointed out by Maram (1979), Santos had one of the first Labor Unions in the country at the time, being Portuguese immigrants the majority of its leaders and members. These factors converge to a "solidary" scenario in Santos, which would favor the spreading of the "tu" variant.

Keywords: historical linguistics; Santos; personal pronouns; linguistic contact; solidarity.

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