

Dialect Contact in Brasília: Variation in Second Person Singular Pronouns

Carolina Queiroz Andrade (*Universidade de Brasília*)

Maria Marta Pereira Scherre (*Universidade de Brasília and Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo*)

Gregory R Guy (*New York University*)

This paper investigates variation in the second person singular pronoun in the speech of children and adolescents in Brasília, the young capital of Brazil. Brazilian Portuguese has a wealth of 2sg pronouns: *você*, *cê*, *tu* all mean 'you'. These forms vary regionally in Brazil: *tu* is common in the North, Northeast, and South, while *você* and its reduced form *cê* are common in Center-West and Southeast regions. Brasília, located in the central region, historically used *você* and *cê*, while *tu* is a new variant, which only began to appear in the city around 2000, so we now find utterances like: “**V**ocê não pode, tipo, **cê** tem a torre (...) sou **tu** não, doido!” (‘You can’t, you have the tower, I’m not you!’). The appearance of *tu* in local usage is likely a consequence of the great migratory movement into Brasília since its founding in 1960. It was built as the national capital in a formerly rural area, drawing massive immigration from all of Brazil’s dialect regions: in a half-century its population has grown from almost nothing to 2.5 million. The result is a natural case study of dialect defocusing and new dialect formation.

The present study reports a multivariate analysis of 1072 tokens of 2sg pronouns from 73 speakers, from three neighborhoods in Brasília, using Goldvarb X (Sankoff, Tagliamonte & Smith, 2005). The overall distribution of the variants is 45% *você*, 30% *tu*, 25% *cê*. Subjects were all locally born and raised, but their pronoun choices are significantly affected by their mothers’ dialect background. Thus *tu* is used at high rates by speakers whose mothers came from Northeastern states, such as Bahia – 63%; Pernambuco – 63%; Paraíba – 56%. But when the mother is from Minas Gerais, where *cê* is widely spoken, *cê* is preferred, with 52%. When the mother is from São Paulo or Espírito Santo, where *você* is more common, our speakers use 71% *você*.

Pronoun choice is further constrained by several linguistic and social factors, besides maternal background. Thus *tu* is avoided in generic references: (factor weight.19, vs. .56 for specific references). And there is a strong persistence effect: use of any variant tends to favor the re-use of the same variant in subsequent clauses (e.g., a preceding *tu* favors current *tu* with a factor weight of .85).

Our results demonstrate that a focalization process is evident in Brasília, by which children and adolescents preferentially employ forms of the 2sg pronoun based on their mother’s dialect, as predicted by Hazen’s theory (2005). But Brasília is now old enough to have children whose mothers were themselves born in the city; such children tend to use *tu* at a 24% rate, far higher than the historical usage of the region. This suggests that a specifically local, Brasiliense dialect is emerging, overriding the dialect differences brought there from other regions of Brazil, but drawing resources from them. This is accompanied by emergent class stratification: speakers of lower class backgrounds use more *tu*.

References

Andrade, Carolina Queiroz (2010). *Tu e mais quantos? A segunda pessoa na fala brasileira*. Master Dissertation, Universidade de Brasília.

Hazen, Kirk. (2005). The Family. In J. K. Chambers, P. Trudgill, & N. Schilling-Estes. (eds.), *The handbook of variation and change*, Edited by Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 501-523.

Kerswill, Paul & Trudgill, Peter. (2005). The birth of new dialect change. In P. Auer, F. Hinskens & P. Kerswill (eds.), *Dialect Change - Convergence and Divergence in European Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 196-201.

Sankoff, David, Tagliamonte, Sali, & Smith, Elen (2005). *Goldvarb X - A Multivariate Analysis Application*. Toronto: Department of Linguistics; Ottawa: Department of Mathematics.

Available at: http://individual.utoronto.ca/tagliamonte/Goldvarb/GV_index.htm#ref

Scherre, Maria Marta Pereira; Dias, Edilene Patrícia; Andrade, Carolina Queiroz; Lucca, Nívia Naves Garcia; Andrade, Adriana Lilia Vidigal Soares (2011). [Tu, você, cê e ocê na variedade brasileira](#). *Papia: Revista Brasileira de Estudos Crioulos e Similares*. Especial(1):117-134