

Comparing Brazilian and European Portuguese:
segmental and prosodic features

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In this paper some distinctive segmental and prosodic features of Brazilian (BP) and European Portuguese (EP) are presented (Callou *et alii*, ms.). Regarding the vowel system, the acoustic characterization of stressed and pre-stressed vowels is compared and, concerning consonants, palatalization of *S* and vocalization of *L* in coda position -- two well-known processes for differentiating the two varieties -- are focused. As for the prosodic characterization, question intonation contours are examined. The segmental analysis is based on data stratified for age and gender from a *corpus* consisting of informal tape-recorded interviews with University graduates, using labovian quantitative methodology. It is shown that the difference between pre-stressed systems in Brazilian and European Portuguese can raise a hypothesis for the explanation of the completion of vowel harmony in Portugal but not in Brazil. Vowel harmony stability in BP can be due to the tendency towards centralization and compactness of pre-stressed vowel system, contrary to EP tendency towards raising.

Vowel harmony process ($m[e]nino \rightarrow m[i]nino$ ‘boy’ ; $c[o]ruja \rightarrow c[u]ruja$ ‘owl’) has been studied from different theoretical perspectives. Three points have received special attention: the domain of vowel harmony, the nature of the features that participate of the process and the fact that vowel harmony may involve a relation between non-adjacent segments (Van der Hulst & Van de Weijer, 1995). The domain of vowel harmony is CV unstressed syllables, a single feature assimilation phonological rule (spreading of a terminal node) and, as Bisol (1989: 193-6) has shown, crucially ordered in the derivational cycle. It is also shown that the change is in different stages in each variety.

Palatalization of *S* and vocalization of *L* are referred as examples of regional pronunciations that although quite similar in their directionality represent different types of change. The difference relies on the fact that *R* can be considered a change from below and palatalization of *S* a change from above. *S* palatalization, emblematic of Rio de

Janeiro dialect, is restricted to some dialects in Brazil, while L vocalization (*sal* [saɫ] *versus* [saw] ‘salt’ and *falta* [faɫta] *versus* [fawta], ‘fault’, is a non-restricted phenomenon, spread all over Brazil, irrespective of social or geographical variables. In Brazilian Portuguese, S palatalization is restricted to coda position while in European Portuguese the process has undergone one more step and there is a merger, as far as its context of application is enlarged: *nascer* (na[s]er in PB, na[ʃ]er in EP); *os sapatos* (u[ʃ]apatos in BP, u[ʃ]apatos in EP).

Finally, the most remarkable intonational distinctions between the two varieties are i) a greater number of pitch accents in neutral declarative sentences in BP than in EP, and ii) the alignment of the F0 peak on the nuclear pitch accent of yes-no questions, associated with the stressed syllable in BP, and with the post-stressed one in EP.

References

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