

## “Short-Term Real Time” study of change: a heterogeneous picture

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The theoretical issue of this paper is related to the consistency between the behaviour of the individual and the community in the indication of linguistic changes in progress. Since the 90's, many sociolinguistic studies have been trying to show how the association of “trend” and “panel” studies contributes to elucidate the “apparent time” predictions. The results obtained by controlled studies show a very regular situation: age grading and real time change in the sense of continuing change (Sankoff 2005).

This paper returns to the subject by examining two possible changes in Brazilian Portuguese (BP): the representation of pronominal subjects and the reduction of the diphthong [ey], as in *beijo* ~ *bejo* (kiss) or *madeira* ~ *madera* (wood). The first process can be characterized as an instance of change in progress across a large period of time, possibly as a consequence of significant modifications in the pronominal and inflectional systems. The second involves a drift that dates from Latin. For both variable phenomena, sociolinguistic studies based on apparent time distributions suggest processes of change in progress (Duarte 1999, 2000; Paiva 1996, among others).

These two processes have been studied again in the light of the short-term real time model (Labov 1994), using samples of the language spoken in Rio de Janeiro. For the trend study, we compare two samples, with similar sociolinguistic stratification, recorded in the early 80's and late 90's (1999-2000). For the panel study, we analysed the speech of 16 individuals interviewed in the 80's and interviewed again in the late 90's. The “real time” analyses show two different situations.

As regards the representation of pronominal subjects (see Duarte 2003), the absence of clear age differences in the community and the stability in the individual may suggest continuous change operating simultaneously in the community and in the individual, but at a slower progress. Such a picture could lead us to pattern 4 among the possibilities presented by Labov (1994) and adapted by Sankoff (2006:5): “the whole community, young and old, are changing at the same rate and therefore show no age differences”.

As for the variable use of [ey] ~ [e], the analysis reveals opposite directions according to the structural environment which follows the diphthong: in both the panel and trend study the semivowel deletion **proceeds** steadily when followed by the flap, as in *madeira* ‘wood’ [ma’deyrə] ~ [ma’derə], and **recedes** significantly, both in the individual and the community, when followed by palatal fricatives, as in *peixe* ‘fish’ [‘peɣʃi] ~ [‘peʃi] and in *beijo* ‘kiss’ [‘beyʒu] ~ [‘beʒu] (see Paiva 2003).

If we consider only the context of palatal fricatives, the comparison between apparent and real time leads us to different conclusions: (a) in apparent time, there is a suggestion of loss of the semivowel, propelled by the younger speakers; (b) in real time, individuals show change with decrease of the process whereas the community fits in the age-grading pattern, with the two intermediate groups exhibiting the highest rates of decrease in the process.

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