

Returning to *Helvécia*, Going to the Amazon: *Eu foi, Ele fui?*

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Abstract:

This paper addresses occurrences of verbal agreement displayed in data collected in *Helvécia*, an Afro-Brazilian community located in Southern Bahia in Brazil, as recorded by Ferreira (1994) and Lucchesi *et al.* (2009), as well as in data collected in two Afro-Brazilian communities located in the Lower Amazon Region of Pará, as recorded by Costa (2019). The authors' records are described and commented by discussing the occurrences of “*ele foi*” and “*ele fui*” verb forms. The results revealed that variants found in *Helvécia* in the 1960s are also displayed in Amazonian communities in 2016, but that “*ele fui*” was found only in the Amazonian communities. This variation was found in the speech of the elderly in the two studied communities, Arapucu and Silêncio. The conclusive hypothesis is that this use characterizes the reduction of the Brazilian Portuguese – BP – verbal paradigm and would be related to an alteration linked to the phonetic level, which is characteristic of the popular norm. In the present study, data are presented as empirical support for those conclusions.

Keywords:

Verb agreement. Variation. *Quilombola* communities.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1986, the book entitled *Diversidade do Português do Brasil: Estudos de Dialectologia Rural e Outros* was published in Salvador, the capital city of Bahia, a state in Northeastern Brazil, and Professor Carlota Ferreira⁵ was one of the authors. The preface of the book states that it brought together papers and works by professors and researchers at Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA). The works were related to two research projects, the Preliminary Atlas of the Speeches of Bahia (PABS) and the Preliminary Atlas of Sergipe (PAS), and even to parallel studies. The book is co-authored by eight women. They are researchers who made history in the studies on Brazilian Portuguese (BP), a hard and outstanding achievement in times when women struggled to conquer their place in academia.

This paper aims to portray and discuss verb agreement displayed in two Afro-Brazilian communities by comparing recorded variations in them with records published in a pioneering study published in 1986⁶ by Carlota Ferreira. The herein mentioned study is widely known in academia and its results are frequently referred to in discussions about the characteristics of the Brazilian Portuguese (henceforth, BP). We intend to relate the results displayed in Ferreira's study to data identified more recently in Afro-Brazilian communities of the Lower Amazon region to preliminarily approach verb agreement in those communities. The text by Carlota Ferreira is often referred to in discussions on the possibility of the existence of Creoles or semi-Creoles in Brazil and it undeniably exhibits a high number of citations among scholars that favor different hypotheses about the origins of BP. Since there is still much to be elucidated about the origins of BP, it remains an important source for those discussions and subsidizes the ones concerning the two main hypotheses that explain them: that of transmission and that of contact. Lucchesi (2009) is among the authors that support the importance of contact for the study of the origins of BP. He favors the existence of irregular linguistic transmission of the light type, which would explain more frequent occurrences of certain varieties in rural communities such as the Afro-Brazilian ones. Lucchesi (2012), among other researchers, uses the findings of Ferreira (1994) concerning the variable use of verbal agreement to show that in more isolated communities there is more erosion in the agreement system. Otherwise, Scherre and Naro (1998) support a derivationist position by arguing that the African presence should be understood only as a trigger, an acceleration of what would already be foreseen in the language.

Those two major hypotheses on the subject unanimously admit the importance of Ferreira's work (1994) for understanding the origins of BP. All those facts point to the importance of Ferreira's work and justify a visit to her herein mentioned text, either as a way of honoring her or to indicate how the phenomena described in it are important for the knowledge of the origins of BP and how they can still be identified today either in isolated *quilombola* communities or in those ones where schooling has not yet imposed the standard variety of the language. Therefore, as previously mentioned, in addition to pointing out some occurrences identified in Helvécia, in the state of Bahia, we aim to describe and discuss some facts then identified which

⁵ In addition to the previously mentioned Professor, the authors of the book included: Jacyra Mota, Judith Ferreira, Myrian Silva, Nadja Andrade, Rosa Virgínia Silva, Suzana Cardoso e Vera Rollemberg, i.e., a group of great women and researchers on Portuguese Language.

⁶ For the purpose of this study, we consulted the second edition of the book which was published in 1994.

were also recorded in two *quilombola* communities in the interior of the Brazilian Amazon Region in 2016, highlighting the verbal agreement system with an emphasis on the use of “ele foi” and “ele fui” forms. In order to address and discuss this topic, we will also visit the study by Lucchesi *et al.* (2009) which also investigated the speech of Helvécia.

We shall go to the North of Brazil. However, we shall first visit the South of Bahia, in Northeastern Brazil.

1. LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN BP: THE AFRO-BRAZILIAN VARIETY

In 2010, the National Inventory of Linguistic Diversity (NILD) (IPHAN, 2016a; IPHAN, 2016b) was officially created by the means of decree Nr. 7,387/2010 which, based on discussions carried out within the Working Group on Linguistic Diversity (WGLD), established six categories of Brazilian languages, namely: i) Indigenous languages; ii) Immigrant languages; iii) Afro-Brazilian Community languages; iv) Brazilian Sign Language (Libras); v) Creoles and; vi) Portuguese language and its dialectal variations (see MORELLO, 2012). The varieties found in BP obviously keep a fundamental relationship with its origins. In order to properly study those varieties, an approach that takes into account not only the history of the grammar of the Portuguese language but also the social history of the population that has made Brazil is demanded. In this sense, it is important to highlight the contribution of the studies on linguistic contacts due to the significant contributions that the black and the indigenous populations must have made to this diversity (see LUCCHESI, 2012).

The National Inventory of Linguistic Diversity (NILD) (IPHAN, 2016a; IPHAN, 2016b) represents a language policy and its main objectives encompass the valorization and promotion of linguistic diversity. Those actions can only be seriously implemented if research is developed to unfold the linguistic reality of the different linguistic communities. As for the Afro-Brazilian varieties, still very discriminated in Brazil, it is necessary to make it clear that the variations found in the Afro-Brazilian communities are not degeneration or imbalance of the language. Rather, the variability is inherent to the language and that movement of variation and change springs from the performance of internal and external embeddings to which the language is submitted.

Regarding the performance of external factors, when it comes to rural varieties, it is unthinkable not to relate them to contact with African languages, for instance, since the black population was pushed to those areas for different reasons. Besides that, it is worthwhile remembering that the black population was once higher than the white one in Brazil (MATOS SILVA, 2004). In other words, it is necessary to consider the history of grammar and not to overlook the social history of the speakers of those communities.

According to Camacho (2013), at least two aspects of the origins of BP must be considered: the derivationist base and the linguistic contact. The latter is supported by Lucchesi *et al.* (2009) in **O Português afro-brasileiro**, a book in which the findings of years of research based on data collected in Afro-Brazilian communities are presented and in which the irregular linguistic transmission of the light type is favored. Among the studied communities is Helvécia which, according to the research, would display traces of a Creole speech, based on the records made by Ferreira (1994). The data in Lucchesi (2009) reveal a different Helvécia as compared to the one visited by Ferreira (1994) in terms of the verbal agreement system described by the author. We shall go back to it later.

2. RETURNING TO HELVÉCIA

Ferreira's (1994) account of her excursion to Helvécia results from her visit to the village in 1961, exactly on February 26th. That visit took place due to the assumption about the existence of a Creole language in the village whose population was then predominantly black. The author mentions a list of recorded occurrences of Creole language there. The author presents the linguistic facts that she considers to be common, i.e., those that had been recorded in other rural areas of Brazil as well those that seemed to be typical to the village. At first, the author lists phonetics occurrences. When describing morphosyntax data, Ferreira (1994, p. 26-31) mentions the use of the first and third person plural with the verb form in third singular, as seen in:

(1a) *nónõkri'o na'rosa*

(1b) *fi'ko'tre*

The author present those facts as characteristic of PB in other rural areas.

On page 27, when mentioning phonetic phenomena, the author records data that are of interest to the current study once they display the employment of the unmarked form for the first person singular.

(2a) *io no 'dormi*

(2b) *io nõ 'podì*

(2c) *io no 'sabi*

According to Ferreira (1994), the occurrences that might point to creolization take place at the morphosyntactic level of the language. Among the phenomena mentioned there are those that concern verbal agreement, which is the focus of this work. On pages 29 and 30, the author mentions the employment of P1 (first person singular) with the employment of the verbal form of P3 (third person singular), which characterizes a morphological simplification of the present tense paradigm, as in the following examples:

(3a) *'io 'bébi*

(3b) *'io 'fas*

(3c) *'io nõ'domi*

(3d) *'io 'kõmi*

(3e) *'io 'sabi*

(3f) *nõ'sabi*

(3g) *'io 'vai*

According to Ferreira (1994), there are only two records of the use of P1 with the verb form of P1:

(4a) *'moru*

(4b) *io 'vo*

The employment of P3 occurred according to the verbal paradigm of BP, says the author.

This type of agreement is also recorded in the past perfect tense. There are 12 occurrences of P1 with the unmarked form, as in *io bati'zo*, *io esque'seu*, *io foi*.

The author shows that with regard to the verb SER the BP verbal paradigm was maintained, as seen in:

(5a) *io so*

(5b) *ela é*

Helvécia receives special attention in the research project called Vertentes. In the book **O Português afro-brasileiro** (LUCCHESI; BAXTER; RIBEIRO, 2009), different discussions are implemented with the data collected in Helvécia⁷ as well as with data collected in other localities that are sites of investigation for the study of the formation of BP. Chapter 14 of the aforementioned book is entitled “Verbal Agreement” deals with an issue that is much discussed in sociolinguistic analyzes and is of great importance in debates about contact languages and the formation of BP. The chapter brings findings of studies by Dante Lucchesi, Alan Baxter and Jorge Augusto Alves da Silva⁸.

⁷ Data collected in the 1990s.

⁸ The authors stage the findings and discussions on the issue by subdividing them into three sections: 14.1 Verb agreement with the first person singular; 14.2 Verb agreement with the third person singular; 14.3 Verb agreement with the first person plural. Emphasis is given to both linguistic and social embeddings in each section. Despite not having a specific section for verb agreement with third

In Helvécia, forms identified by Carlota Ferreira in 1961 could still be found with low frequency in the speech of elderly people interviewed by Alan Baxter and Dante Lucchesi in 1994 (LUCCHESI *et al.*, 2009, p. 93)⁹. Among those forms, the unmarked one for P1 (first person singular) as in “nunca mais eu sentiu” was recorded (Lucchesi *et al.*, 2009, p. 93). According to Lucchesi, Baxter and Silva (2009, p. 331):

Verb number and person agreement alongside nominal number agreement are the aspects of Portuguese grammar that exhibit the widest variation processes in Brazil and qualitatively distinguishes the Brazilian variant of Portuguese from the European variant where that variation is, at best, residual and peripheral. Besides being one of the most discussed issues in sociolinguistic analyses, verb agreement is the core of debates about the relevance of contact between languages in the formation of the Brazilian linguistic reality. (LUCCHESI; BAXTER; RIBEIRO, 2009, p. 331).

The details of the research depicted by Lucchesi, Baxter and Ribeiro (2009, p. 339) showed that in the control of the data referring to the variable General frequency of application of the verb agreement rule with the first person singular in Helvécia, in Bahia, we had for “with agreement” 82% of frequency and 18% of frequency for “no agreement”. Those figures are respectively exemplified by *eu falo / eu falei*; and *eu fala / eu falou*¹⁰. According to the authors, a significant difference in percentages of frequency of use of those variants evinces the advancement of the verb agreement rule with the 1st person singular in the grammar of the speech community.

The results concerning the social variables showed that in relation to age, Helvécia presents

“[...] an advanced stage of the process of acquiring the verb agreement rule” with P1 (first person) in the singular. The variables *gender* and *stay outside the community* corroborate what had already been confirmed in the results referring to the age group variable “defining an imminent tendency of homogenization of the linguistic patterns of the speech community around the new system with verbal agreement. [...]” (LUCCHESI; BAXTER; RIBEIRO, 2009, p. 346).

According to Lucchesi *et al.* (2009), when it comes to verb agreement there is no reference to the use of the form “ele fui” in relation to the verbs **ir** [to go] and **ser** [to be]. It is precisely this use that we want to focus on. In two of the studied communities in the Amazon, Silêncio and Arapucu, the use of the unmarked verb form was found for P1 (first person singular) **was** as in Helvécia with the verbs **ser** and **ir**. Moreover, differently from data collected in Helvécia, the ones collected in Silêncio and Arapucu displayed the use of *ele fui* and *eu foi*. According to Ferreira (1994), there are records of the form *fu* for *fui* for P1 (first person singular) in Helvécia, but not for *ele/ela*, and *a gente*¹¹, an alternative first person plural form (see FERREIRA, 1994, p. 31). Now, we shall move on from the South of Bahia to the North of Brazil.

3. AFRO-BRAZILIAN COMMUNITIES IN THE AMAZONIAN REGION

The data herein discussed were collected in Arapucu and Silêncio, Afro-Brazilian communities located in the municipality of Óbidos, in the Lower Amazon Mesoregion. The socio-history of the Afro-Brazilian communities in this part of Pará State in the Amazon Region is built on the advance of Portuguese occupation

person singular, this phenomenon is always referred to, as explained further on. The authors also highlight that in the past variation in the unmarked form of the third person singular with uses related to different persons of speech used to happen. However, there has been a reduced level of variation with this type of uses among Afro-Brazilian BP speakers over the years which has made this phenomenon a rare one.

⁹ See the chapter entitled “O português afro-brasileiro: as comunidades analisadas” by Dante Lucchesi, Alan Baxter, Jorge Augusto Alves da Silva and Cristina Figueiredo in the book “O português afro-brasileiro” by Lucchesi *et al.* (2009).

¹⁰ This type of agreement is completely understandable and recurrent in communities where Afro-descendant varieties resist. It is also common usage that results from linguistic contacts.

¹¹ In a paper we are working on we demonstrate that the form “fui” occurs with *eu*, *tu*, and *a gente*.

motivated by territory domain and economic interests (FUNES, 1995). The black labor force became effective in the region from the second half of the 18th century onwards and a large number of those Africans came from the Bantu ethnic group (idem). In the Lower Amazon Region of Pará, the trajectory of the black people in time and space is marked by conflicts, losses, and resistance. An instance of such situation is the struggle for land and rights until today.

Arapucu has an area of 777,91 (not yet titled) where 79 *quilombola* families live. Those families live from the cultivation of manioc, flour production and fishing. Silêncio, together with 10 other Afro-Brazilian communities, is part of the territory called Área das Cabeceiras which was titled in 2000 and comprises a total area of 17,189,693 hectares. In Silêncio, 156 families live from the production and trading of manioc, flour, corn and fishing. Thus, you can see that both communities hold rural habits.

Access to Arapucu and Silêncio can be done either by river or by road. Arapucu is one of the closest Afro-Brazilian communities to the urban área of Óbidos. Considering the Overland route, Arapucu is about 17 km from Óbidos and Silêncio is about 100 km from there.

Lexical variation in Afro-Brazilian communities was the theme of a doctoral thesis. Data for the study were collected in Arapucu and Silêncio (COSTA, 2019). Herein, variation in the use of verbal agreement for the verbs “ir” and “ser” in the past perfect is studied by specially addressing P1 (first person singular) and P3 (third person singular). The data for the study were collected through conversations with semi-directed topics by following the plurality of respondents¹² criterion established by the Pluridimensional and Relational Dialectology (RADTKE; THUN, 1996; THUN, 1998) in 2016. It means that the interviews took place in pairs with people from the same social profile. For Arapucu and Silêncio communities the sample was constituted by interviewees with the profile of the older generation (GII) with educated (Se) and non-educated (Ce) men and women over 50. The schooling degree considered was either basic education or some literacy degree. The schools are over 47 years old in both communities and they currently offer preschool, elementary school, and modular high school education. Those schools serve other *quilombola* communities. The school in Silêncio also offers Youth and Adult Education (EJA / YAE) programs. In Arapucu, four people were interviewed, one educated man and one educated woman, and two non-educated women. In Silêncio, five people were interviewed, one educated man and one educated woman, and one non-educated man and two non-educated women.

4. OCCURRENCES OF “EU FOI”, “ELE FUI” VERB FORMS IN ARAPUCU AND SILÊNCIO

In Silêncio, occurrences such as “Passado dias *eu foi*...” (GIICe). This inflectional usage is common and often happens when forming Creoles. It is characterized by unmarked forms employed for different persons. It is found still today, though infrequently, in *quilombola* communities that speak an Afro-Brazilian variety (see LUCCHESI *et al.*, 2009). In 2016, an occurrence of *ele foi* was recorded as “porque *ele foi* embora daqui eu num sei...” (GIISe).

Grounded on linguistic records of the two Afro-Brazilian communities in Óbidos, state of Pará, in the Amazon region, it was possible to identify some peculiar realizations regarding verbal agreement. As Ferreira (1994) observed in Helvécia, in the state of Bahia, data collected in the traditional communities herein researched also displayed a peculiar use of verbal inflections with alternation between 1st and 3rd persons singular, which by the way is the focus of the current study, especially concerning the verb *ir* and when inflected in the past perfect tense of the indicative mood, as in the examples that follow:

(6a) “...Dois vez¹³. Uma vez eu **fui**... eu **fui** pescar” (ARAPUCU, GIICe, line 61).

¹² The criterion “plurality of the interviewees” foresees the accomplishment of interviews in groups. The objective for so is to increase the representativeness and frequency of metalinguistic remarks (THUN, 1998).

¹³ It is an example of nominal agreement that would also be representative of irregular linguistic transmission.

(6b) “Aí teve um tabalho dum senhô assim ganhando dinheiro né **eu foi** pra lá” (SILÊNCIO, GISe-Woman; lines 81-82).

(6c) “Aí um curumim **fui**” (ARAPUCU, GISe-Woman; line 418).

It is possible to observe in the examples herein shown that the inflection of the verb *ir* in the first person singular in the perfect past of the indicative mood follows the paradigm of the standard Brazilian Portuguese: “eu fui”. However, “eu foi” also occurred once in the data, which characterizes the use of the unmarked form with P1 (first person singular). So, do those results indicate that this unmarked use is sporadic in those communities? It is the analysis of P3 (third person singular) forms that can give us clues about the issue.

Regarding the inflection of the same verb *ir*, two possible agreement forms were found: “ele foi” and “ele fui” for the P3 (third person singular). It can be seen in the examples found in the Arapucu data:

(7a) “Quem colocô esse nome para mim **fui** a minha avó” (lines 7-8).

(7b) “Bem, quando **foi** um dia -- q’eu gosto de pescá também, gosto de pescá, mermo agora q’eu tô com essa idade mas eu gosto de pesca” (lines 89-90).

Data collected in Silêncio also displayed that variation:

(8a) “Ai o **meu pai foi** uma nuite disque...” (line 216).

(8b) “E **ele foi** subiu lá: numa (empeneira) que a gente (ficava) lá no terreno dele” (line 252).

The employment of “foi” and “fui” occurred in a variable way in those communities researched and in the speech of the collaborators, that is, the same collaborator alternated between the use of “foi” and “fui” for P3 (third person singular), as can be seen in the following example:

(9) “E aí **fui** chegando a tarde aquela dor **foi** aumentando” (SILÊNCIO, GISe-Woman; line 93).

In Arapucu “fui” occurs among interviewees of the two sexes and literate and illiterate ones. However, in Silêncio, it occurs among men and women, but only among non-educated interviewees. That finding can already give us clues about the effect of schooling on the use of that verbal form, which is considered representative of rural communities.

It is worthwhile noting that the variation observed for P3 (third person singular) occurred among speakers over 50 years old, i.e., the oldest ones. It is in accordance with the findings described by Ferreira (1994), who states that it is in the speech of the elders that the remaining marks of creole speeches are found, as seen in Helvécia, in the state of Bahia. That result is also found in the Afro-Brazilian communities researched in the current study.

Still speaking of verbal agreement in those traditional communities in the Amazon region, other curious occurrences were disclosed even though they were not the focus of the present study. This is the case of the variation form for “a gente” since occurrences of “a gente fui” was displayed in the data.

(10) “e a escama dela aí que **a’ente** (= a gente) **fui**... eu fui sabê também né” (ARAPUCU, GISe, lines 161-162).

This use was also attested to “tu fui”, as confirmed by the example that follows:

- (11) “Eu nem lembo mais como a gente dizia, o certo é que a gente fazia uma contage ali, “quem saiu **fui** tu...” (ARAPUCU, GIICe-Man; lines 227-229).

Regarding verb *ser* inflected in the past perfect of the indicative mood it was possible to observe the variation between the forms for the third person singular (P3) and the third person plural (P6). In the analyzed data, the use of inflected forms *foi/fui* were found used to report a past event without necessarily specifying the person in the discourse. In those cases, the verbal forms are used exclusively to indicate an elapsed time, as in “**Foi** isso que aconteceu” and in “**Fui** isso que aconteceu”. As for P6 (third person plural), the following occurrence was registered:

- (12) “...eh então **fui** essas cosa só, o::tas cusa que se deu assim:: otos problema” (ARAPUCU, GIICe, line 202).

The findings regarding the employment of “eu foi” show a characteristic variety present in Afro-Brazilian communities. However, the use of “ele fui” shows rare occurrences in other communities in the research we have carried out so far. In those communities there are records of the use of *foi* with different verbal persons. This use, however, is less frequent nowadays due to the process of homogenization that takes place in favor of the standard norm. In Arapucu and Silêncio there is a higher frequency of the employment of “ele fui” which could be mistakenly interpreted as a P1 (first person singular) verb form. That phenomenon would characterize a different verbal reduction from the one usually adopted when reducing the BP verbal paradigm (see LUCCHESI, 2012). Is the verbal paradigm being reduced in favor of *fui* rather than *foi*?

Given those findings, we decided to reflect on the motivations for the use of “eu fui” rather than “eu foi” in those communities. Scherre and Naro (1998), while supporting the derivationist perspective, reinforce that the changes found in BP are already foreseen in the language, not being, therefore, a result of either the formation of creoles or contact. According to the authors, contact would only have triggered the phenomena.

Generally speaking, the contact perspective, which has one of the most eminent defenders Lucchesi (2015), states that the study of grammar associated with the study of the socio-history of those communities can give clues to the origins of BP. The author defends the irregular linguistic transmission by favoring the linguistic contact.

We herein assume that investigating *quilombola* communities necessarily implies allusions to contacts. We defend that contact and the study of the socio-history of BP should provide important clues for the understanding of PB in *quilombola* communities and BP in general. Yet, it is necessary to look for elements to point out ways to understand the variants that are also found in the language structure. In archaic Portuguese such use could already be found. It is possible to find this alternation in the Galician Linguistic Atlas - ALGA (FERNÁNDEZ REIS, 1990, map 361). That said, we suspect that the use of “ele fui” in those communities characterizes a kind of interface between morphosyntax and phonology. In other words, the use of “ele fui” would be associated with the raising of /o/ which starts to be uttered as [u] in those localities. Thus, internally speaking, that variation could be associated with phonetic-phonological issues. Therefore, we decided to make a brief survey of vowel raising in the studied communities, including the vowel in diphthongs. The findings reveal that vowel raising is the norm in the investigated communities. In the data of elderly speakers who use “ele fui” it was found, among others, forms such as [’nujtʃi], [’tuda’nujtʃi], [a’xuʃ], [vu’vu], [viu’lɛw] and [ju’ga] for **noite**, **toda noite**, **arroz**, **vovô**, **violão** and **jogar**, respectively. In the next page, a summarized though not exhaustive table of some representative forms of raisings found in the communities surveyed follows.

Table 1 - The raising of vowels in diphthongs, monophthongs and hiatuses.

	Diphthongs	Monophthongs	Hiatus
Arapucu - GISe	<i>cuisa</i> (coisa), <i>nuite</i> (noite), <i>duis</i> (dois), <i>puis é</i> (pois é)	<i>cusa</i> (coisa), <i>mudú</i> (mudou), <i>ensinú</i> (ensinou), <i>depu</i> (depois), <i>rubaru</i> (roubaram), <i>casú</i> (casou), <i>pucu</i> (pouco), <i>pegú</i> (pegou), <i>ficú</i> (ficou), <i>cumprú</i> (comprou), <i>passú</i> (passou), <i>tirú</i> (tirou), <i>tú</i> (estou), <i>utra</i> (outra)	<i>persua</i> (pessoa)
Arapucu - GIICe	<i>abençuu</i> (abençou), <i>boa nuite</i> (boa noite)	<i>cusa</i> (coisa), <i>despachú</i> (despachou), <i>uta</i> (outra), <i>boa nute</i> (boa noite)	<i>abençue</i> (abençoe)
Silêncio - GISe	<i>cuisa</i> (coisa), <i>duis</i> (dois), <i>nuite</i> (noite)	<i>pegú</i> (pegou), <i>entrú</i> (entrou), <i>rudú</i> (rodou), <i>mudú</i> (mudou), <i>chegú</i> (chegou), <i>secú</i> (secou), <i>mandú</i> (mandou), <i>passú</i> (passou), <i>matúr</i> (matou), <i>sú</i> (sou), <i>vú</i> (vou), <i>puca</i> (pouca), <i>dus</i> (dois), <i>depus</i> (depois), <i>nute</i> (noite)	<i>viulão</i> (violão), <i>persua</i> (pessoa)
Silêncio - GIICe	<i>cuisa</i> (coisa)	No occurrences	No occurrences

Sources: the authors.

Table 1 presents several examples that show vowel raising in different contexts. Raisings can be seen in diphthongs, in diphthongs when they are monophthongs and even in hiatuses.

In the investigated communities the raising can also be detected in words with different stresses. In BP raising of mid vowels in pretonic final position often takes place. Although less frequently, it is also possible to identify raising among vowels in non-final posttonic position. Raising is not common in stressed syllable. In Silêncio and Arapucu, raising could be found in stressed syllables in initial (*tuda*), medial (*ispusa*) and final (*avú*) positions, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 - The raising in syllables with different stresses.

	Pretonic position	Tonic position	Posttonic position
Arapucu - GISe	<i>encustava</i> (encostava), <i>mudinba</i> (modinha), <i>bunito</i> (bonito), <i>murava</i> (morava), <i>muradó</i> (morador)	<i>isis</i> (esses), <i>tuda</i> (todas), <i>fugu</i> (fogo)	<i>tavu</i> (estávamos)
Arapucu - GIICe	<i>acuntecia</i> (acontecia), <i>mulhadu</i> (molhado), <i>ulhando</i> (olhando), <i>dubei</i> (dobrei), <i>chucô</i> (chocou), <i>afugado</i> (afogado), <i>murava</i> (morava), <i>subrado</i> (sobrado), <i>cunfiança</i> (confiança)	<i>butu</i> (boto), <i>nuvu</i> (novo), <i>canua</i> (canoa), <i>agustu</i> (agosto)	<i>tinbu</i> (tinham), <i>vinbu</i> (vinham), <i>difçu</i> (difícil)
Silêncio - GISe	<i>murava</i> (morava), <i>muró</i> (morou), <i>murá</i> (morar), <i>dubrava</i> (dobrava), <i>vurtei</i> (voltei), <i>ulhava</i> (olhava), <i>tumava</i> (tomava), <i>urelha</i> (orelha), <i>prumessa</i> (promessa), <i>rivista</i> (revista), <i>ivulúido</i> (evoluído), <i>ivangélicu</i> (evangélico)	<i>avú</i> (avô), <i>unde</i> (onde), <i>tuda</i> (toda), <i>murtu</i> (morto), <i>arruz</i> (arroz), <i>ispusa</i> (esposa), <i>tucu</i> (toco), <i>buca</i> (boca), <i>pulu</i> (pelo), <i>huje</i> (hoje), <i>fulha</i> (folha), <i>às viz</i> (às vezes)	No occurrences
Silêncio - GIICe	No occurrences	No occurrences	No occurrences

Sources: the authors.

Vowel raisings happen in different verb moods and tenses.

Table 3 - Vowel raising in different verb mood and tenses.

Present	<p>“Como eu que assim já na velhice, já:: da idade q’estú ((= que eu estou)) 79 anos já sentindo certas dores” (Arapucu, GIICe, lines 221-223)</p> <p>“E::u sú daqui q’inda ((= que ainda)) tô cuntando me lembrando alguma coisa ((riso))” (Arapucu, GIICe, lines 249-250)</p> <p>“Mas tem pessoas aqui que... pássu ((=passa)) às vez dia e noite no lago” (Silêncio, GIICe, lines 256-258)</p>
Perfect	<p>“Ela tinha uma colega e:: rompeu a música ela pegú a... a colega dela e furam dançá” (Silêncio, GIICe, line 483)</p>
Future	<p>“Pa::... quando fusse no tempo da festa, tê cumo acendê as... aquelas candeia né” (Silêncio, GIICe, lines 284-285)</p>
Imperative	<p>“Andu ((= anda)) vai... ajeita lá” (Silêncio, GIICe, line 126)</p>

Sources: the authors.

Data from the studied communities reveal that raising is the norm among the elderly. Its use spreads to the verbs *ser* and *ir* as seen in Table 4 below.

Table 4 - The raising in the verbs *ir*, *ser* and *fazer*.

Verb <i>ir</i> - past perfect	Verb <i>ser</i> - past perfect	Verb <i>fazer</i> - past perfect
<p>a) “A senhora já fui pa lá po Silêncio?” (Silêncio, GIICe, line 464)</p> <p>b) “Então ela saiu com tudo isso na costa e fui levando que... tá certo, eu penso assim que se fosse só o capim que tivesse andando assim ele num ia sai daí né” (Arapucu, GIICe, lines 122-123)</p> <p>d) “ái um curumim fui” (Arapucu, GIICe, line 418)</p> <p>e) “Murto assim, porque ele fui embora daqui eu nu sei... s’ele é vivo ou morto” (Silêncio, GIICe, lines 482-483)</p>	<p>a) “Quando fui de manhã eles vieru nem sinal do capim, o capim subiu:: fui pra... pr’esse ((= para esse)) que chamo Furo, logo ali né...” (Arapucu, GIICe, lines 108-109)</p> <p>b) “Quando fui ali pu volta duma hora eu cumecei a sentí uma ferrada assim” (Silêncio, GIICe, line 84)</p> <p>“olha: a minha mulhé nu fui uma mulhé ruim comigo” (Arapucu, GIICe-Man; lines 269-270)</p>	<p>a) “nós tinha casa essa uma já é do meu filho q’eu dei pr’ele, qué dizê que ele fiz a casa” (Arapucu, GIICe, lines 313-314)</p> <p>b) “E aí... meu pai murô uns tempo aqui cum:: a sogra dele, depus não deu certo ele foi prucurô... saí né e já fiz uma casa ali mais pra fora e nós fumu ((=fomos)) pra lá murá ((=morar))” (Silêncio, GIICe, lines 147-149)</p>

Sources: the authors.

As it can be seen, vowel raising happens with the verbs *ir* and *ser*. It also happens with the verb *fazer* in the past perfect tense – “ele fiz”. These facts corroborate our hypothesis about “ele fui” being a material form of vowel raising and, therefore, being a phonetic variation of the unmarked form “ele foi”. Evidence of so is the fact that it happens with “a gente fui”, “fui tu”, “ele fiz” and in P6 (third person plural) as highlighted in example 12 mentioned beforehand. Returning to the question asked earlier (section 4), there could be more occurrences of the unmarked form for P1 (first person singular). Evidence of that is the presence of “eu foi” in the data. The form “eu foi” could be realized with a phonic variation and materializing as “eu fui”.

Those results and conjectures do not imply that this variation is motivated by the grammatical structure. Apparently that use would be only associated with an internal effect. However, we understand that it

is subordinated to the action of factors associated with the socio-history of Afro-Brazilian communities. The occurrence of “fui” in the data doubly depicts the norm used in the rural communities studied that use the popular norm, which in Lucchesi’s (2015) words characterizes a strand of sociolinguistic polarization triggered by the social apartheid that exists in Brazil. We reiterate that contact must be at the basis of that recorded difference. Changes in the verbal paradigm has taken place. There has been suppression of the morphemes of number and person simultaneously with phonic alteration which has already been attested in other rural communities with “fui” replacing “foi”.

The fact that this variation is recorded in Afro-Brazilian communities that maintain rural traditions (see COSTA, 2019) and that it occurs especially among elderly speakers corroborates Lucchesi’s (2012) view that it occurs with greater productivity in rural areas, where the contact would have been more intense. Those areas are nowadays occupied by Afro-Brazilians.

A curious question that we are unable to answer now concerns the fact that the two studied communities display a significant difference relating to the distance from the urban center but display the use that is characteristic of rural isolated communities, which contradicts what is previewed by Lucchesi (2012). Arapucu is only 17 kilometers from the urban center of Óbidos while Silêncio is more than 100 kilometers away from there. Despite that both communities display linguistic uses that are more characteristic of isolated ones. The use of those forms may be preserved among elder speakers who can remain isolated and make little contact with the urban center despite being close to it and, thus, they can keep the norm they have acquired. Moreover, the concept of isolation should not be related only to physical spatial issues.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present paper dealt with the use of verbal agreement of the verbs **ir** and **ser**¹⁴ in a comparative way. The results referring to Helvécia herein collated come from Ferreira (1994) and Lucchesi *et al.* (2009). Those referring to the *quilombola* communities of the Amazon region, Arapucu and Silêncio, come from Costa (2019). In those two communities, besides the occurrences identified in Helvécia by Ferreira (1994) regarding the verbal agreement of P1 (first person singular) and P3 (third person singular), there is an occurrence apparently characterized by the use of P3 (third person singular) with the verbal form of P1 (first person singular). The conclusive hypothesis we arrived at is that this variation is characteristic of Afro-Brazilian communities and that it should be studied considering the interface between the language levels of organization and emphasizing the effect of variation in the phonetic level on its realization. It is due to the fact that there is evidence that vowel raising is the norm in the studied communities, which allows the employment of the form *fui* even in the company of *a gente*. It has to do with the simplification of the verbal paradigm because of the employment of the unmarked form, as foreseen and registered in studies on contact, formation of Creoles and semi-Creoles that undergo a phonetic change represented by the raising of the vowel [o] followed by the norm of the studied communities. The recorded variation is common in the speech data of elderly people.

Both Helvécia and the communities studied displayed traits among the elderly that could characterize an Afro-Brazilian Portuguese. Those traits are barely found nowadays in rural areas of Brazil because of the influence of urban linguistic patterns. In the last paragraph of the text about Helvécia, before the presentation of the notes, Carlota Ferreira (1994, p. 32) says of her desire to return to Helvécia:

“We intended to return to Helvécia on a scientific expedition for extensive and intense data collection. We had good purposes and lacked financial resources. Doing Science costs money and few are interested in funding language research”.

¹⁴ Having achieved our objective of describing and comparing some occurrences of verbal agreement identified in Helvécia, in Bahia, and in *quilombola* communities located in the Amazon region, and due to time and space limits for writing this paper, we inform that a more specific quantitative-qualitative study on the topic is being prepared to test the effect of internal and variables on the studied variation. It will soon be the scene for a future paper.

Some aspects mentioned in that quotation seem unchanged, especially with regard to the funding of science in the current situation Brazil faces. However, it is worth mentioning that what she then said was followed by resistance since she and other colleagues who published the book **Diversidade do Português do Brasil: Estudos de Dialectologia Rural e Outros** performed many accomplishments along the academic path among which is the publication of the Linguistic Atlas of Brazil. Finally, perhaps she did not know it at that time that many scholars went and would go to Helvécia motivated by her dreams and work. Today, we returned to Helvécia and went to the Amazon, where the forms “ele foi” and “ele fui” can be found. We have done so to make a contribution to the study of the origins and description of BP as well as to honor Carlota Ferreira for the pioneering work that has helped to shed light on many issues regarding this discussion.

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