A Geolinguistic Study of the Lexical Variable *Prostitute* in Manaus

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Abstract:

In this paper, we analyze the lexical variants of the referent *prostitute* in manauara speaking. As theoretical support, we follow Chambers & Trudgill (1994), Radke & Thun (1996) and Thun (2010). For the study, we analyzed the data collected through a question asked to residents of four neighborhoods in the city of Manaus, state of Amazonas, Brazil: Praça 14 de Janeiro (South Zone), Nova Cidade (North Zone), Zumbi dos Palmares (East Zone) and Glória (West Zone). In each neighborhood eight informants were selected to compose the analysis in the diatopical (four neighborhoods), diasexual (male and female), diagenerational (18 to 30 years old and 50 to 65 years old) and diastratic (complete High School and complete Higher Education) dimensions, thus characterizing a geolinguistic research in the pluridimensional modality. The result showed that, in these four neighborhoods, the lexical variable *prostitute* presents ten lexical variants in manauara portuguese: *prostituta*, *puta*, *dama da noite*, *garota de programa*, *bagaça*, *mulher de programa*, *sem vergonha*, *vadia*, *mulher da vida* and *cesta básica*.

Keywords:

Dialectology. Lexical variation. Prostitute. Manaus.

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we analyze the lexical variants of *prostitute*[3] in the Portuguese spoken in four neighborhoods of the city of Manaus, state of Amazonas (AM), Brazil. As a theoretical contribution, the research is characterized as dialectological in the pluridimensional aspect, according to Radtke & Thun (1996) and Thun (2010), involving, in this case, the diatopic, diasexual, diagenerational and diastratic dimensions, whose parameters can influence the phenomenon of linguistic variation. For Calvet (2002), linguistic variation occurs when two or more alternants have the same meaning and when the difference between them has a stylistic or social function.

Cardoso (2010) explains that dialectal research seeks to observe the relationship between geographic space and linguistic facts in an attempt to understand the phenomenon of linguistic variation from field studies. It is a study through which the different forms documented in the speaking of informants representative of the communities researched are compared, allowing for the identification of dialectal similarities and differences, whether in relation to the geographical space (diatopic dimension) in which the data were collected, or in relation to age, sex, and schooling of the informants, or even the ethnicity of the speakers, the degree of bilingualism, mobility, economic class, among other diastric dimensions. Multidimensional dialectology can also include the comparison between different speaking styles (diaphasic dimension).

The present study, under the theoretical focus of multidimensional dialectology, aims to analyze the extralinguistic factors (place, gender, age, and education) that may influence the occurrence of lexical variants of the lexical variable *prostitute*, using as *corpus* the answers of informants from the following neighborhoods in the city of Manaus-AM: Praça 14 de Janeiro (South Zone), Nova Cidade (North Zone), Zumbi dos Palmares (East Zone) and Glória (West Zone).

As for the *prostitute* word, documented in the 19th century and coming from the Latin *prōstitūta*, it is defined in the Aurélio Dictionary (FERREIRA, 2009, p. 1314) as "a woman who practices the sexual act for money". According to Lima (2011, *apud* SANTOS; COSTA, 2020, p. 177), prostitution has occurred for a long time and has always been seen as something wrong and immoral by society. Since Ancient Rome, there were already women who were licensed to act as prostitutes, paying a fee for this licensing. In view of this, it is not uncommon for the different designations of the women who sell their bodies for money are pejorative and also reveal linguistic taboos, mainly due to the fact that religions view this profession as immoral.

In Brazilian Portuguese, women who sell their bodies for money are referred to by a large number of words and expressions, thus constituting expressive lexical polymorphism. In the Linguistic Atlas of Amapá - ALAP, for example, 20 variants were documented, namely:

> whore, prostitute, woman of life, pussy, call girl, gold digger, bitch, depraved, single woman, slut, girl, ploque, shameless, street woman, female prostitute, naughty girl, offered, piranha, melitrix and Babylon. But the most recurrent variants were: prostitute, with 38%; whore, 16%; and life woman, with 12% (SANCHES, 2014, p. 15).

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[3] A person who has a sex for money.

Azevedo (2015) recorded, in the Semantic-Lexical Atlas of the North of Mato Grosso - ASLNMAT: its topodinamic influences, the following lexical variants of (prostitute): *prostituta*, *puta*, *rapariga*, *quenga*, *mulher da vida*, *piranha*, *biscate*, *meretriz*, *vagabunda*, *vadia*, *tia*, *mulher sem vergonha*. The most recurrent were *prostituta*, *puta* and *mulher da vida*.

The lexical variants of *prostitute* were also investigated by the Projeto Atlas Linguístico do Brasil - ALiB through the application of the question *how do you call a woman who sells herself to any man?* In response to this question, Cardoso *et al.* (2014) registered, in volume 2 of ALiB, with data only from the state capitals, the following designations: *prostituta*, *puta*, *garota de programa*, *rameira*, *rapariga*, *meretriz*, *prima*, *rampeira*, *quenga*, *biscate*, *mulher da vida*, *mulher de programa*, *mulher piranha*, *mulher de vida fácil*, *mulher galinha*, *mulher de rua*, *mulher à toa*, *mulher à aluguel* and *mulher de zona*. These variants have been registered in the North of Brazil and also in other regions. In Manaus, for example, according to the ALiB, the following forms were documented: *prostituta*, *puta*, *garota de programa*, *rameira*, *mulher piranha*, *mulher de programa* and *mulher de vida fácil*, totaling seven occurrences. The intention was to confirm, in the present study, the documented variants and, eventually, to add to this ALiB's list new variants for the same lexical variable with respect to manauara speaking.

1. THE LEXICON OF A LANGUAGE

The lexical field is one of the components of the languages in which the process of variation and linguistic change occurs in a productive way, which is why this segment has been the subject of a great deal of dialectological research.

About the lexicon, Biderman (1978, p. 139) states

> Any lexical system is the sum total of all the accumulated experience of a society and the body of its culture through the ages. The members of that same society function as subject agents in the process of perpetuation and continuous re-elaboration of the lexicon of their language.

The lexicon acquired through experience in verbal intercommunication throughout life is thus part of the speaker's linguistic repertoire.

For Spencer (1991), the term lexicon means dictionary, which contains a list of words accompanied by their meanings and other useful linguistic information. For Basilio (1995), there is a difficulty in pointing out what is actually listed in the lexicon, because it is a broad term and because it is not easy to define a word.

According to Katamba & Stonham (2006), a word refers to an abstract vocabulary term, constituting a lexeme, which may present different realizations. In the Portuguese language, for example, the word prostitute is a lexeme, because it presents different variations in its root, and may acquire different formations such as: *prostituto*, *prostituído*, *prostituição*, *prostituir*, etc. The term prostitute, therefore, is configured as a base word, from which different linguistic forms emerge.

It can be said that the lexicon of a language comprises current words, in use, archaic words, in disuse, and potential words, those to be created from time to time, which may gain notoriety or fall into oblivion.

Researching the lexicon enables the observation of the reading that a community makes not only of its context, but also of the preservation of part of the socio-historical memory, as well as of its linguistic-cultural heritage, besides allowing the recording and documentation of lexical diversity.

2. DIALECTOLOGY AND ITS DIMENSIONS

"Dialectology is the study of dialects" (CHUMBERS & TRUDGILL, 1994, p. 19). The concept of Dialetology, for Cardoso (2010, p. 15), is "a branch of linguistic studies that takes on the task of identifying, describing and situating the different uses in which a language diversifies, according to its spatial, sociocultural and chronological distribution". When there are two or more linguistic forms to indicate the same referent,

both at the semantic-lexical level and at the phonetic-phonological, morphosyntactic or discourse levels, for example, the phenomenon of dialectal variation occurs.

All natural languages have undergone and undergo the process of variation, spontaneously, but under the influence of factors internal to the structure of the language itself or of external factors. The variation that begins at some stage of the language may or may not result in language change. At the same time as the process of dialectal leveling occurs, the language is changing due to multiple causes. These changes result in the formation of dialectal varieties and eventually new languages. Differences in intonation, pronunciation, lexical and phraseological choices, morphosyntactic and discourse levels, etc. are still subject to linguistic variation studies.

Coseriu (1982) states that linguistic variation happens from one place to another (diatopic variation), from one group of speakers to another group of socially situated speakers such as more educated and less educated (diastric variation), in the different use of speech styles in utterance and interaction (diaphasic variation), etc. All these dimensions can be subcategorized into specific strata. In the diatopic dimension, for example, one may want to compare linguistic data from rural and urban speakers, or from speakers in old areas and new areas, or from monolingual areas and bilingual areas, or from topostatic (low mobility) and topodynamic (high mobility) people, etc. Similarly, one can compare the speaking of older people with the speaking of younger people (diagenerational dimension), or of men and women (diasexual dimension), or of less educated people with more educated people (diastric dimension), or monolingual people with bilingual people (dialingual dimension). And in the diaphasic dimension, it is possible to envisage the comparison of linguistic data produced in different styles, such as spontaneous conversation, formal speaking, structured questionnaire, semi-directed conversation, reading, on a scale from speaking of least control to speaking of maximum control.

According to Coseriu (1982), it is through the study of language that one can more clearly observe the accumulated sociogeographic factors of a society in the course of history, acting and modifying the factors that characterize individuals. Dialectology is responsible for seeking linguistic facts not only in their pure context, but also in their original context, which are collected directly from the person responsible for modifying or maintaining the language: the speaker.

It is a fact that all natural languages undergo the process of linguistic variation and change. Therefore, the task of dialectologists and sociolinguists is to describe and explain these phenomena, observing which linguistic and extralinguistic factors are influencing the realization of the linguistic variables in the various grammatical and lexical components.

According to Razky (2010), in Brazil, given the linguistic diversity, not only of the Portuguese language, but also of the contacts between languages and varieties, as well as the large territorial extension, geosociolinguistic studies have great social relevance.

An example of this linguistic diversity in geographic space is found in Azevedo (2013) on Amazonian Portuguese, regarding lexical variants to name a common lake bird in the Amazon region. In Baixo Amazonas, in the state of Pará, such a lake bird is named by the categorical variant *piaçoca*. In contrast, in the Middle Solimões region, in Amazonas State, the categorical occurrence was *jaçanã*. The result reveals, therefore, a phenomenon of lexical arealization, differentiating one region from another by the categorical appropriation of a specific lexical variant for the same referent in each of the areas researched by Azevedo.

Linguistic variation and change probably attract much more public attention and criticism than any other linguistic issue. Variation and change do not have to mean deterioration or decay because, for example, older people look at the casual speaking of young people and conclude that the patterns have changed noticeably, and still attribute the responsibility for this to various factors, such as the school, where standards of language education have changed a lot in recent years.

Language is a system that fulfills the function of facilitating communication and constituting socio-historically situated subjects, among other no less important functions. In the process of interaction and

contact, linguistic variation and change occur. First, there is variation (two or more alternatives for saying the same thing), which may persist over time in covariation, and then, eventually, there is linguistic change, a process that results in the replacement of one variant by another(s).
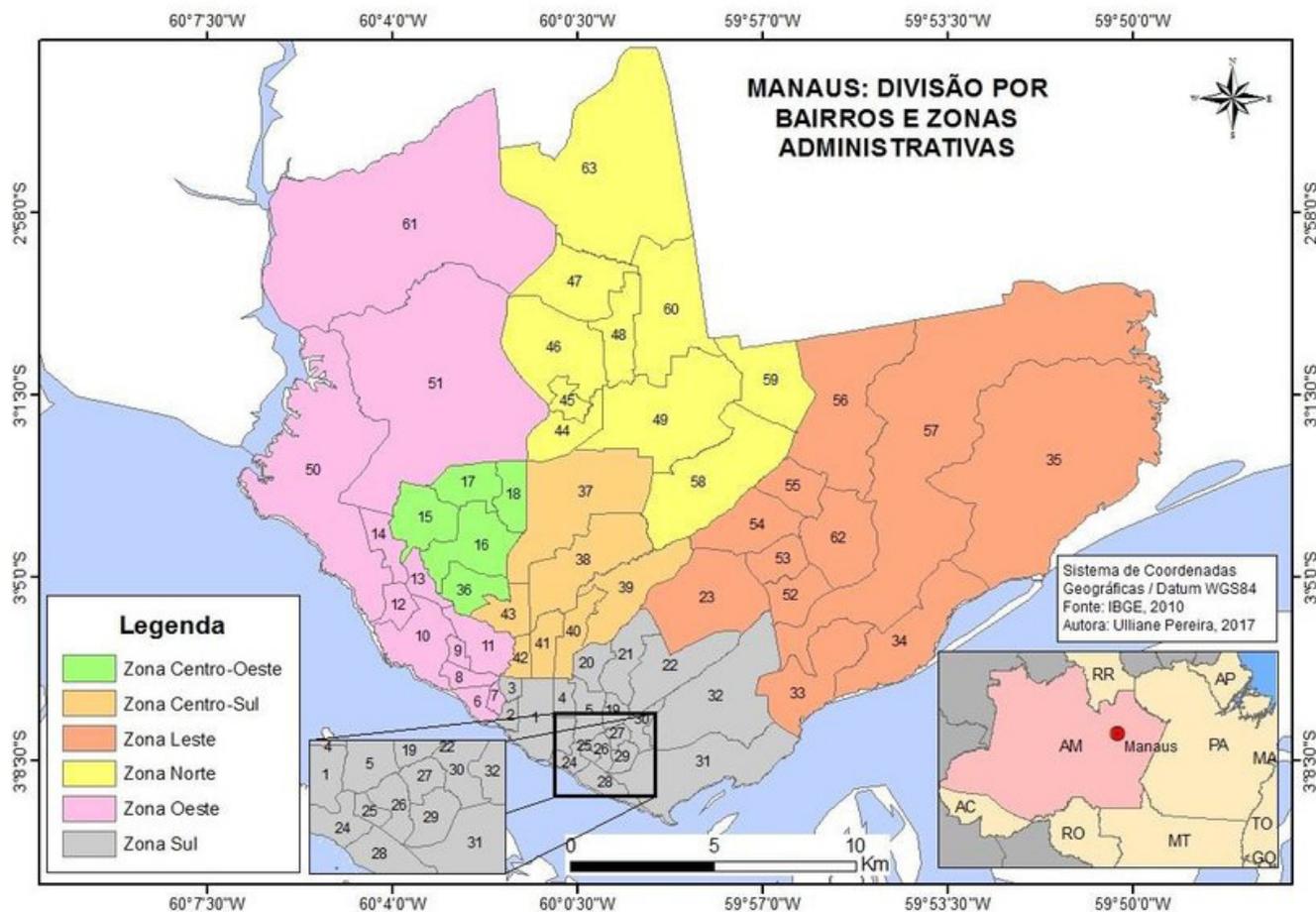
In this particular study, as stated above, we seek to analyze the lexical variation related to the slang *prostitute* in four neighborhoods of the city of Manaus, capital of the state of Amazonas.

3. The Survey Points and the Informants

As this is a field research, the following neighborhoods were chosen as survey points in the city of Manaus-AM: Praça 14, in the South Zone; Nova Cidade, in the North Zone; Zumbi dos Palmares, in the East Zone; and Glória, in the West Zone. The purpose was to investigate how four neighborhoods in Manaus, which are far from each other, are similar and how they differ in terms of lexical variants of the variable *prostitute*. The data were collected from the application of the question: *What is the name given to the person who sells herself to any man, in the streets of the city of Manaus?*

Figure 1 shows a representation of the survey points selected for this research: the number 4 represents the Praça 14 de Janeiro neighborhood in the South Zone; number 7, the Glória neighborhood in the West Zone; number 53, the Zumbi dos Palmares neighborhood in the East Zone; and number 60, the Cidade Nova neighborhood in the North Zone.

Figure 1 - Manaus: division by neighborhoods and administrative zones.

Source: Araújo *et al.* (2014)[4].

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[4] Available on the site https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Figura-1-Mapa-de-localizacao-da-cidade-de-Manaus-destacando-suas-zonas-administrativas_fig1_324240149. Accessed on 07.24.2021.

In addition to the four neighborhoods surveyed (geographical dimension), the informants were stratified into the following dimensions: diagenerational, age group 1 (18 to 30 years old) and age group 2 (50 to 65 years old); diasexual, male *versus* female; diastratic, Schooling 1 (Complete High School Education) and Schooling 2 (Complete College Education). Thus, it was possible to analyze the data collected in line with the extralinguistic diatopic (the neighborhoods Praça 14 de Janeiro, Nova Cidade, Zumbi dos Palmares and Glória) and diastratic (age, sex and education) dimensions. Furthermore, 32 informants were selected, eight in each survey point (four males and four females). The participant profile of this research can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 - Profile of informants.

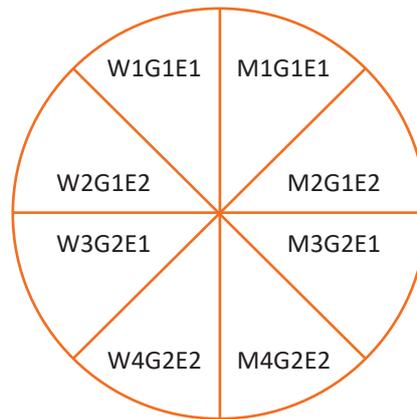| Informant	Sex	Age group	Schooling
1 (W1)	Woman	18 - 30	Complete High School
2 (M1)	Man	18 - 30	Complete High School
3 (W2)	Woman	18 - 30	Complete Higher Education
4 (M2)	Man	18 - 30	Complete Higher Education
5 (W3)	Woman	50 - 65	Complete High School
6 (M3)	Man	50 - 65	Complete High School
7 (W4)	Woman	50 - 65	Complete Higher Education
8 (M4)	Man	50 - 65	Complete Higher Education

Source: Prepared by the authors.

4. The Semantic-Lexical Chart

With the use of the software Paint and Excel, the lexical chart of the variable (*prostitute*) was elaborated, thus enabling the visualization of the linguistic variants in the neighborhoods of Manaus: Praça 14 de Janeiro, Nova Cidade, Zumbi dos Palmares and Glória.

In order to show the lexical variations, we chose the following coding for the female gender: W1, W2, W3, W4 (woman 1, woman 2, woman 3, and woman 4); and for the male gender: M1, M2, M3, M4, (man 1, man 2, man 3, and man 4). Regarding age, we coded F1 (age 18 to 30 years) and F2 (age 50 to 65 years). Regarding schooling, E1 (informant who has completed High School) and E2 (informant who has completed Higher Education) were coded.

The lexical variation associated with the profile of the informant, in turn, was represented according to the scheme stipulated in Figure 2, in which W1G1E1 means Woman 1, age group 1 (18 to 30 years) and Education 1 (complete High School); W2G1E2 means Woman 2, age group 1 (18 to 30 years) and Education 2 (Complete High School); W3G2E1 corresponds to Woman 3, age group 2 (50 to 65 years) and Education 1 (Complete High School); W4G2E2 can be read as Woman 4, age group 2 (from 50 to 65 years) and Education 2 (Complete High School); M1G1E1 means Man 1, age group 1 (from 18 to 30 years) and Education 1 (Complete High School); M2G1E2 means Man 2, age group 1 (from 18 to 30 years) and Education 2 (Complete High School); M3G2E1 means Male 3, Age Group 2 (50 to 65 years), Education 1 (Complete High School); and M4G2E2 can be read as Male 4, Age Group 2 (50 to 65 years), Education 2 (Complete High School).

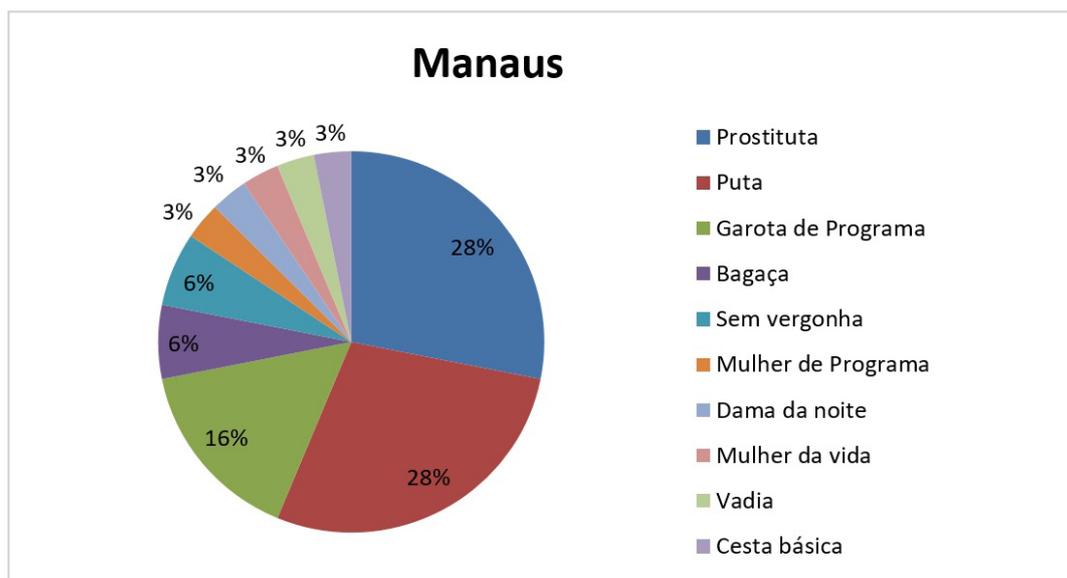**Figure 2 -** Coding the informants' profile.

Figure 2 has been inserted in Map 1, on the next page, to represent each speaker, duly stratified, and each linguistic variant, which will be represented by a characteristic color.

5. THE VARIANTS OF THE *PROSTITUTE* VARIABLE

We found ten lexical variants according to the answers given by informants representing the four zones of Manaus (North, South, East and West), when asked about: *What is the name given to the person who sells herself to any man, at night, in the streets of the Manaus city?* The answers were: *prostituta* and *puta*, variants considered conservative, since the oldest records date back to the 13th and 19th centuries, respectively (HOUAISS, 2009); while *garota de programa*, *bagaça*, *sem vergonha*, *mulher de programa*, *dama da noite*, *vadia* and *cesta básica*, supposedly innovative variants.

Considering, then, the city of Manaus, in the overall, in which 32 answers were analyzed, the results obtained were the occurrence of ten lexical variants with the following frequency and percentage of occurrence: the variant *prostituta* occurred nine times, equivalent to 28% of the total; *puta* occurred nine times, equivalent to 28%; *garota de programa* occurred five times, equivalent to 16%; *bagaça* and *sem vergonha* occurred twice each, equivalent to 6% each; and *mulher de programa*, *dama da noite*, *mulher da vida*, *vadia* and *cesta básica* occurred once each, each making up 3% of the total of 32 responses given by the informants as shown in Graph 1.
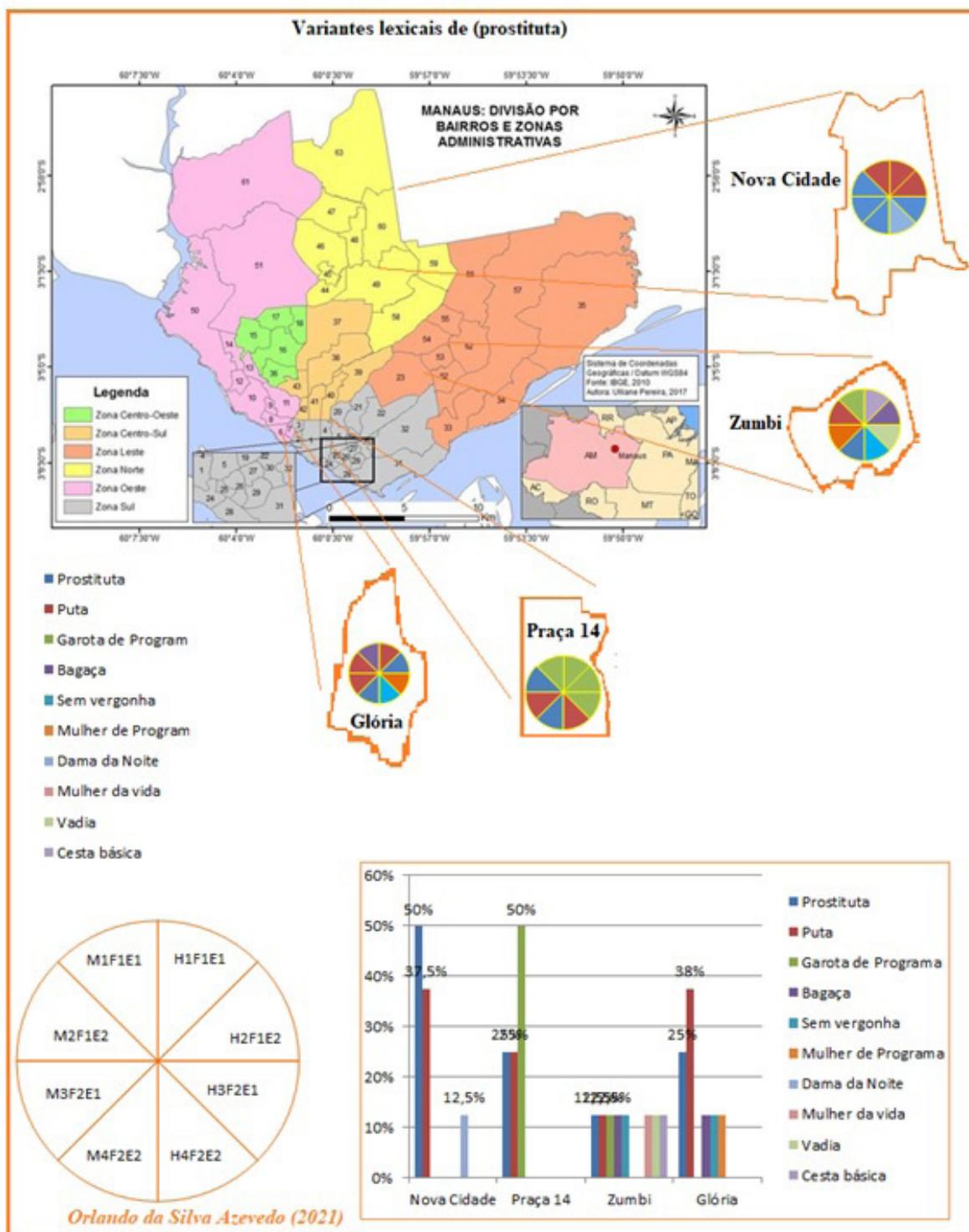
Graph 1 - Percentage of occurrences of the variants for *prostitute* in manauara Portuguese.

As the data in Map 1 demonstrated, in the diasexual dimension (male and female), the variant *prostitute* occurred more frequently in the female parameter, with seven occurrences (21.9%); while the alternant slut appeared more frequently in the male, with four occurrences (12.5%). On the other hand, the variant call girl had two occurrences (6.3%) in the female parameter, and three occurrences (9.4%) in the male parameter. As for the variants *bagaça* and *sem vergonha*, each had two occurrences, one in the male and one in the female parameter (3.1% each). The results also showed that the variants *mulher de programa*, *dama da noite*, *vadia* and *cesta básica* occurred only once in the male parameter (3.1% each); while *mulher da vida* occurred once and only in the female parameter (3.1%).

Map 1 - Variants of the *prostitute* variable.

Source: Adapted from Araújo *et al.* (2014).

In terms of the diagenerational dimension, according to Map 1, the term *prostituta* had seven occurrences (21.9%) in age group 2, from 50 to 65 years, and two occurrences (6.3%) in age group 1, from 18 to 30 years. The term *puta* occurred five times (15.6%) in age group 1, from 18 to 30 years old, and four times (12.5%) in age group 2, from 50 to 65 years old. The form *garota de programa* occurred four times (12.5%) in age group 1 and once (3.1%) in age group 2. The variant *bagaça* occurred once (3.1%) in each age group. And the *sem vergonha* variant occurred twice only in age group 2 (6.25%). With an incidence only and only in age group 1, the variants *mulher de programa*, *mulher da vida*, *vadia* and *cesta básica* appeared, each corresponding to 3.1% of the total. Finally, the variant *dama da noite* had an incidence only (3.1%) and only in age group 2.

According to the diastric dimension (Schooling 1, Complete Secondary Education, and Schooling 2, Complete Higher Education) (see Map 1), the variant *prostituta* occurred seven times (21.9%) in Schooling 2 and twice (6.3%) in Schooling 1. The term *puta* appeared five times (15.6%) in Schooling 1 and four times in Schooling 2 (12.5%). The term *garota de programa* occurred four times (12.5%) in Schooling 1 and once (3.1%) in Schooling 2. The term *bagaça* occurred once (3.1%) in each parameter; while *sem vergonha* occurred twice (6.25%) and only in Schooling 2. The variants *mulher de programa*, *mulher da vida*, *vadia* e *cesta básica* occurred once each (3.1% each) only in Schooling 1. Finally, the variant *dama da noite* occurred only once (3.1%) and only in Schooling 2.

According to the data in Map 1, in the diatopic dimension, in the Praça 14 neighborhood, the variant *garota de programa* predominates with four occurrences (50%), from a total of eight possibilities; and in the Nova Cidade neighborhood the variant *prostituta* appears with four occurrences (50%) from a total of eight; in the Zumbi dos Palmares neighborhood, eight different variants were registered, as follows: *prostituta*, *puta*, *garota de programa*, *bagaça*, *sem vergonha*, *mulher da vida*, *vadia*, and *cesta básic*a, that is, each variant occurred once, equivalent to 12.5% of the total of eight possibilities. Finally, in Bairro Glória, the variants *prostituta* and *puta* had close incidences, with two occurrences for the former, equivalent to 25%, and three occurrences for the latter, equivalent to 38% of the total of eight possibilities.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The *corpus* analysis made it possible to carry out the survey of the lexical variants of *prostitute*, following the register in consonance with the dimensions and parameters of dialectological research already explained above. About the variants found, the following is stated:

a) The lexical variants *prostituta*, *puta*, *bagaça* and *vadia* have simple structures, constituting themselves as base words; while *garota de programa*, *dama da noite*, *mulher da vida*, *sem vergonha*, *mulher de programa* and *cesta básica* are nominal periphrases, that is, they are compound structures.

b) The lexia *prostituta* had higher productivity among women, with seven occurrences (21.9%); in age group 2 (from 50 to 65 years old), with seven occurrences (21.9%) and in Schooling 2 also with seven occurrences (21.9%).

c) In the diatopic dimension, the variants *prostituta* and *puta* stood out, presenting high incidence and the same percentage of occurrence in the general computation. However, in Praça 14 (South Zone), the most recurrent form was *garota de programa* (four times); in Cidade Nova (North Zone), the most recurrent form was *prostituta* (four times); in Glória (West Zone), the most recurrent form was *prostituta* (three times); finally, in Zumbi dos Palmares (East Zone) there was a great lexical diversity, with eight lexical variants, all with one occurrence.

As stated above, in a linguistic community there are different ways to designate the same referent from the extralinguistic world. A variable may present two or more variants that may be in a process of covariation, competing with each other to occupy the place in the grammar or, in this case, in the lexical component.

As seen previously, the variable *prostitute* presented ten variants, as follows: *prostituta*, *puta*, *garota de programa*, *bagaça*, *sem vergonha*, *mulher de programa*, *dama da noite*, *mulher da vida*, *vadia* and *cesta básica*, of which the oldest are *puta* and *prostituta*, which were documented, respectively, in the 13th and 19th century according to

Houaiss (2009). Such linguistic variants are more conservative; nevertheless, they carry stigma. According to Cunha (2010), the *puta* term is usually associated with the Latin form *pūtus* (little boy, boy), which flexed resulted in the form *puta* (girl). The derogatory meaning referring to the woman who prostitutes herself is controversial. The forms *garota de programa*, *mulher de programa* and *dama da noite*, on the other hand, are innovative and relativize the stigma carried by the two previous variants and are more in line with the globalized reality of today's world. The semantic content of the linguistic variants *bagaça*, *sem vergonha*, *mulher da vida*, *vadia* and *cesta básica* is quite depreciative in the scale of social values.

The terms *prostituta*, *puta*, *garota de programa* and *mulher da vida* were also registered by the Linguistic Atlas of Brazil - ALiB in Manaus; however, the terms *bagaça*, *sem vergonha*, *dama da noite*, *mulher da vida*, *vadia*, and *cesta básica*, which were catalogued in this research for the city of Manaus, are not in the ALiB data.

The study is not exhaustive here. This is a sample, leaving open the possibility of further research on the same referent, in the same dimensions and, eventually, with the inclusion of other dimensions and parameters of dialectological research.

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