

ABSTRACT

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT WITH FIRST PERSON PLURAL IN BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE: COMPARING EVIDENCE FROM DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES

This study is part of a project about several related morphosyntactic changes in Brazilian Portuguese using data from VARSUL data base. Three communities in the South of Brazil are considered: Porto Alegre, the capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul and its political and cultural center; Panambi, a German-Portuguese bilingual community; and São Borja, a community located on the border with Argentina. The sample includes sociolinguistic interviews with speakers stratified according to age, gender and level of formal education. The variable investigated is verbal marking with first person plural subjects. The variants are: standard agreement (-mos ending) and two non-standard forms: zero and /s/ deleted –mo inflections. Supposing two different variable rules, three separate Varbrul analyses were made: a) contrasting the three variants; b) contrasting zero inflection with both –mos and –mo endings taken together; and c) contrasting only –mos and –mo endings. Results show different factor groups associated with zero inflection and non-standard –mo inflection, supporting the idea of having two separate variable rules. Formal education seems to play an important role in favoring the standard form. Comparison of the three communities in this study show interesting similarities, which contrast with the results of studies carried out in other communities in other areas of the country. These differences are related to arguments of both losing or acquiring verbal agreement in Brazilian Portuguese. We claim different social groups may be changing in different directions, though convergence may be the final result.