

Media representations and sociolinguistic perceptions of Pajubá, the queerlect of Brazil

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On November 4th, 2018, the Brazilian National High School Exam (ENEM) included a question about dialects that referenced *Pajubá*, a dialect spoken by segments of the queer community in Brazil. The inclusion of this question on ENEM generated great controversy and led to the publication of numerous news reports in the Brazilian media about the case. The nationwide debate that ensued led me to be interested not only in how news media represented the presence of Pajubá on ENEM, but also in how Pajubá is generally perceived by Brazilians. To approach these distinct but interrelated topics, in this talk I discuss two separate studies.

(i) In the first study, I investigate the heteroglossia present in news reports about the presence of Pajubá on ENEM through a critical approach to texts (Fairclough, 1989; 1992) and Bakhtin's (1981) concept of dialogism. More specifically, I make use of the Engagement network proposed in Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory in conjunction with van Leeuwen's (2008) work on the representation of social actors as a means to analyze how authorial voices implicitly present their stances towards the issue at hand by mobilizing other voices. The findings demonstrate how publications of all political inclinations make use of similar strategies within the Engagement network (*e.g.*, attributions of voice, counterings, endorsements, among others) to counter or distance themselves from positions that disalign with the authorial voice's stance on the evaluated object, while endorsing the ones that better align with it. The analysis also points to a trend in centrist and left-leaning publications—in comparison with right-leaning ones—to expand the dialogic space by including more social actors whose stance is at odds with that of the authorial voice.

(ii) In order to investigate the social meanings assigned to speech containing Pajubá lexical items and sociolinguistic attitudes towards its users, the second study employs a matched-guise experimental design. Participants (n=56) listened to randomly ordered stimuli and rated them across a number of cognitive/behavioral, affective and identity scales. The quantitative analysis was guided by three overarching questions: (a) how does the presence/absence of Pajubá alter participants' perceptions of the speaker's identity? (b) which aspects of listeners' identities and traits present significant correlations with positive/negative judgements of Pajubá? (c) Are there significant correlations between the different attitudinal scales? If so, how are perceptions of sexuality and non-normative gender identities connected to other perceptions of identity and personhood? The findings indicate positive correlations between the presence of Pajubá and participants' judgments of the speaker as presenting a non-normative sexual identity. They also shed light on the ideological processes that permeate attitudinal judgments of queer language in Brazil in addition to demonstrating the effects of lexical choice in listeners' interpretive schemas that relate language use to identity display.

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2 – 3:30 PM, via Zoom

Register: <https://forms.gle/1PEN3ZjYsL92NUZK7>

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