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Solidarity within the city of Santos and in the usage of personal pronouns by its inhabitants

The city of Santos (Brazil) stands out as the only documented locality in the state of São Paulo where the variation between the pronouns “tu” (not observed in the rest of the state) and “você” (similar to the French “tu” and “vous”) is documented (Modesto 2006). Interactions between the Brazilian and the Portuguese immigrants in former times may be responsible for such a linguistic result, as Santos registered almost half of its population composed of immigrants circa 1900 (Frutuoso 2004). In 130 personal letters (from 1890 to 1920) from Portuguese immigrants in Brazil (available on the digital collection of the Museum of Immigration of São Paulo, 2019), the pronoun “tu” is widely used whenever interlocutors present symmetry of power in their social interactions (i. e. a conversation between siblings). "Power and solidarity" are related to interlocutors' pronoun choice in a conversation (Brown and Gilman 1960). Traits of “solidarity” were observed in the linguistic contact of the Brazilian and the Portuguese in Santos (circa 1900), supported by: (i) the demography and social practices of a community as significant variables in the process of linguistic variation in contact situations (Ravindranath 2015), as Mello (2007) shows that the urban expansion of Santos concentrated the immigrant workers in its central area; (ii) one's influence in the community and the adoption of new dialectal forms (Dodsworth 2017), as Maram (1979) points out that Santos had one of the first Labor Unions in the country at the time, being Portuguese immigrants the majority of its leaders and members; and (iii) the geographical space's and mobility's influences on the spreading of linguistic forms (Britain 2013), as Mello (2007) highlights Santos' urban reforms and its network for mobility and commerce. These factors converge to a "solidary" scenario in Santos, which would favor the spreading of the "tu" variant.

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