

VARIAÇÃO NA EXPRESSÃO DA PRIMEIRA PESSOA DO PLURAL EM TEXTOS DE ALUNOS DO ENSINO FUNDAMENTAL: UMA PROPOSTA PEDAGÓGICA

VARIACIÓN EN LA EXPRESIÓN DE LA PRIMERA PERSONA DE PLURAL EN TEXTOS DE ESTUDIANTES DE ENSEÑANZA FUNDAMENTAL: UNA PROPUESTA PEDAGÓGICA

VARIATION IN THE EXPRESSION OF THE FIRST PERSON OF PLURAL IN TEXTS OF STUDENT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: AN PEDAGOGICAL PROPOSAL

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RESUMO: O presente trabalho investigou as variantes usadas para expressão do P4 em produções de alunos do Fundamental II. Percebeu-se, na aplicação da mediação pedagógica, com foco na variação *nós/a gente*, que em textos dos gêneros relato de experiência [+oralidade] os alunos manifestaram a prática de escrita da sociedade letrada brasileira alternando o uso de *nós/a gente*. Já no gênero relatório [+letramento], o uso da variante tradicional foi semicategórico. Os resultados refletem, por um lado, a desconstrução da crença de que a escrita só aceita a variante canônica e, por outro, o avanço no processo de letramento dos alunos, que passaram a reconhecer os contextos em que as duas variantes de P4 podem coocorrer e aqueles em que só se admite a variante canônica, de modo que se tornaram capazes de transitar de um ponto a outro do contínuo, a depender do gênero textual em se dá o evento comunicativo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Primeira pessoa do plural (P4). Contínuo de Variação. Letramento.

RESUMEN: *El presente trabajo investigó las variantes utilizadas para la expresión de P4 en producciones de estudiantes de Primaria II. En la aplicación de la mediación pedagógica, enfocándose en la variación nosotros / la gente, se notó que en los textos de los géneros reporte de experiencia [+ oralidad] los estudiantes manifestaron la práctica de escritura de la sociedad alfabetizada brasileña, alternando el uso de nosotros / la gente. En el género reporte [+ alfabetización], el uso de la variante tradicional fue semicategorial. Estos resultados reflejan, por un lado, la desconstrucción de la creencia de que la escritura solo acepta la variante canónica y, por otro, el progreso en el proceso de alfabetización de los estudiantes, quien vino a reconocer los contextos en los que*

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poden coocurrir las dos variantes de P4 y aquellos en los que solo se permite la variante canónica, de modo que pudieron moverse de un punto a otro del continuo, dependiendo del género textual en el que tiene lugar el evento comunicativo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Primera persona del plural (P4). Continua de variación. Alfabetización.*

ABSTRACT: *The present work investigated the variants used for P4 expression in productions of Elementary II students. In the application of pedagogical mediation, focusing on the variation we/a gente, it was noticed that in texts of the genres experience report [+ orality] the students manifested the writing practice of the Brazilian literate society, alternating the use of we/a gente. In the report genre [+ literacy], the use of the traditional variant was semi-categorical. The results reflect, on the one hand, the deconstruction of the belief that writing only accepts the canonical variant and, on the other hand, the progress in the students' literacy process, because they have come to recognize the contexts in which the two variants of P4 can co-occur and those in which only the canonical variant is admitted, so that they have become able to move from one point to another of the continuum, depending on the textual genre in which the communicative event occurs.*

KEYWORDS: *First person plural (P4). Variation continuum. Literacy.*

Introduction

Linguistic science has been showing for a long time that the language is not uniform, homogeneous, but full of varieties with their own structural organization, that is, their respective norms. According to Faraco (2008), norm, in this sense, represents what is common, usual and normal for a given group of speakers. In other words, the linguistic phenomena manifested in the different grammatical components (phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax) and also in the lexicon of a speech community constitute its norm, which includes not only fixed phenomena, but also phenomena in variation.

In a society like the Brazilian, which inhabits a country of continental dimensions, there are different linguistic norms, and each corresponds to a grammar - a structural and functional manifestation of the historical language - that is linked to the culture of a particular speech community. Although it is known, as stated by Faraco (2008), that the cultivated variety is practiced by the most educated speakers and is endorsed by agents that standardize society, such as the press, the school, universities, the Church, among other cultural entities, one cannot deny the existence of other linguistic varieties in the Brazilian reality. Thus, we realize the need to recognize them when addressing the description of grammatical facts in the teaching of Portuguese, in order to break with the

idea of homogeneous language, as recommended by official documents, such as the National Curriculum Parameters (PCN, Portuguese initials) and the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC, Portuguese initials).

Among the variable phenomena present in Brazilian Portuguese (hereinafter BP), there is one that is thought-provoking, because, despite being very present in the orality of the educated urban norm, it still does not enjoy frank acceptance in the written form, especially that practiced in the school context: *we/a gente*³ variation for the expression of the first person plural or P4. There are authors, like Lopes (2003, 2007), who prefer the term P4 (fourth person) to the traditional nomenclature “first person plural”, on the grounds that such a grammatical person would not be the plural of me (me + me), but the expression of another reality (me + someone). However, as school practice makes wide use of traditional nomenclature, in this work we will take, for practical reasons, the two terms as equivalent.

The following are some examples of the two variants, extracted from the sample by Omena (1996, p. 185) with our emphasis:

- (01) Because the only thing that is not going well is the following: that **we** have a great difficulty here in getting the bar documentation up to date ...
- (02) So, **a gente** is in a position to make the right documentation, so that they do not have the right to interfere in our movement, understand?⁴

In the oral modality of BP, the traditional pronoun is often replaced by the form, the product of a grammatical process of the name people to express the plural first person, according to the statement by Omena (2003). The speaker's preference for the innovative form, according to Lopes (1996), is due to the fact that it provides an individual's disengagement with the discourse, making it more vague and generic, as such variant can encompass other people.

The increasing use of the form in BP was confirmed by several studies carried out in the scope of Variationist Sociolinguistics, such as the studies carried out by Omena (1996; 2003), Lopes (1996; 2003; 2007), Machado (1995), Maia (2003), Rocha (2009), Mendonça (2010), Vianna (2011), among many other researchers throughout Brazil.

³ For practical reasons in this translation the expression *a gente* will be used in Portuguese, it's meaning is explained as follows. The expression *a gente* has no direct translation to the English language, it is a synonymous of “we”. The closest translation would be “the people” since the term, such as “we”, would refer to oneself plus others. The main difference between then is the conjugation, since *a gente* even been a plural conjugate on the singular, example: *A gente foi até a praça*, the same sentence with the equivalent word *nós* (we) would be written as: *Nós fomos até a praça*.

⁴ Since the English conjugation doesn't quite apply to the situation, as a translation resource, the use of “is” was chosen over the use of “are”, to make a better example of what would be to hear that in Portuguese.

Knowing that the school tradition, supported by literate Brazilian society, gives prestige in written records to the traditional pronoun <we> to the detriment of the usual <a gente>, present both in speech and in writing, this work is justified by the need to develop in students the ability to move between the different written text genres, from those that allow the use of both variants to those that select the prestigious form of traditional grammar in the expression of P4, in order to contextualize the variable phenomenon in a continuous way, bringing students closer to effective writing practice of the most literate Brazilians. For this, we apply a pedagogical mediation based on the theory of continuum of variation according to Bortoni-Ricardo (2004), a theoretical model that was formulated to understand the phenomenon of linguistic variation in BP, selecting among them the orality-literacy continuum, which approaches Marcuschi's (2001) continuum, in which the different textual genres are located in an imaginary line of speech for writing. Thus, we work with the following genres organized in the orality-literacy continuum: experience report and report. The students were then invited to produce a text in the first genre, located between orality and literacy, to later convert it into the second genre, belonging to the continuum's literacy pole, following some of the stages of the retextualization process according to Marcuschi (2001).

Therefore, the present work has as general objective to bequeath a contribution to the teaching of the Portuguese language with regard to the approach of linguistic variation in the classroom from a systematic work with a variable phenomenon, that is, the alternation *we/a gente*. This purpose seeks to overcome two opposing teaching practices in addressing this phenomenon: on the one hand, the one that ignores the pronoun, labeling it as inappropriate to any form of written expression; on the other, one that is exempt from any grammatical description in Portuguese language classes, failing to present the contexts of occurrence of both variants, under the pretext that teaching grammar is outdated.

As specific objectives, we intend the following: (i) to present a survey of the variants used for the representation of P4 in texts produced by elementary school students from genres organized in the orality-literacy continuum (see BORTONI-RICARDO, 2004); (ii) favor the literacy of the students involved in the research so that they recognize the contexts of use of the variants in each point of the continuum, in order to develop the ability to move from representative texts of the [+ orality] pole to the [+ literacy] pole.

As a research hypothesis, it was postulated that, from the pedagogical mediation, the students involved would become aware of the distribution of the candidate variations

for the realization of P4 in the continuous orality-literacy, in order to manifest in their texts the writing practice of the literate society Brazilian: in textual genres not located in the [+ literacy] pole, such as the experience report, they would use both variants, but in representative genres of the [+ literacy] pole, such as the report, they would select only the canonical pronoun.

Literature review

The traditional Portuguese grammars approach

In the approach taken by traditional grammars, the prescription of rules based on the uses of classical Literature writers is privileged, which generates a distance from the language that is actually spoken. Thus, the description of traditional grammars does not consider the heterogeneity of the language, the interaction between speakers or the existing variations, which are now considered as deviations from the grammatical norm.

Traditionally, it is assumed that the personal pronouns of the straight case serve to perform the function of subject of the sentences, and the obliques, generally for the function of complementing the verbs. In order to investigate the prescription given by the traditional grammars to the pronominal framework, demonstrating the P4 approach, three grammars of established authors were verified, namely, the Normative Grammar of the Portuguese Language, by Rocha Lima (2008 [1972]); the Modern Portuguese Grammar, by Evanildo Bechara (2007); the New Grammar of Contemporary Portuguese, by Celso Cunha and Lindley Cintra (2007 [1985]). Rocha Lima (2008) does not list in his grammar the term as one of the forms of expression of the first person in the plural, although he recognizes it as a second person (P2) next to the list of personal pronouns of the straight forms (p. 316). Not even in footnotes does the author allude to the variation in P4 expression in BP.

Likewise, Bechara (2007), in his grammar, excludes the form <a gente> from the pronominal frame. However, without being able to ignore the expressive oral use of the form <a gente> in the Brazilian variety of Portuguese, he puts an observation in a small font to mention the variation we are now studying. According to the author, “the use of the noun people (*gente*) preceded by an article and in reference to a group of people who include themselves in speech, or to this one alone, passes it to pronoun and is used outside the ceremonious language” (BECHARA, 2007, p. 166).

The grammarian also highlights in this observation that in both cases the verb must be in the 3rd person singular and, to exemplify the addendum, presents the following excerpt:

(03) It is true that *a gente* sometimes have tantrums here [AH.4, II, 158]⁵

In this way, Bechara (2007) gives the status of discreditable variant to <a gente>, even if the use of such form is visible in lectures given by literate Brazilians, such as the grammarian in question, in academic events that, in theory, are ceremonial moments.

Like the previous grammarians, the authors Cunha and Cintra (2007) explain in the pronominal table as first person plural only <we>. This framework does not include the entry of new linguistic items in the pronominal paradigm and, in addition, includes forms that are not used in contemporary Brazilian Portuguese. Subsequently, in a section called Formulas of Representation of the 1st Person, at the end of the Study of Treatment Pronouns (p. 310), the authors put the use of <a gente> as typical of the normal colloquium in place of both <we> and <I>, noting that in these cases the verb should always be in the third person singular. Although the authors cite in the preface of the work that they aim to describe contemporary Portuguese that consider the existing variations and that value the oral and written expression of the current language, they register the usual form <a gente> as part of the normal colloquium in an observation distant of the section pertinent to the subject, that is, the presentation of the framework of straight pronouns, in a way that give the innovative form the status of marginal phenomenon, despite its wide and established use.

Scientific (descriptive) or linguistic-oriented grammars, on the other hand, propose to research and analyze a set of characteristics specific to a certain variety of a language. When analyzing the pronominal table presented in some descriptive grammars that dealt with the cultured variety of BP, we find the following: Grammar of uses of Portuguese, by Neves (2011), there is a complete invisibility of the form <a gente> as P4 and the author (2011, p. 469-470) at the end of the exposition on personal pronouns, specifically in subsection 5.6 entitled “In colloquial language the **noun phrase A GENTE** is used as a **personal pronoun**” (p. 469), explains that the variation we focus on in this work it is a form accepted only in the popular colloquium.

⁵ É verdade que a gente, às vezes, tem cá as suas birras [AH.4, II, 158].

In the same way, the Houaiss Grammar of the Portuguese language, by Azeredo (2008), favors the typical uses of the Brazilian literate class, so that the variety chosen as the object of description is the cult, so he himself asserts that he intends to report to normative considerations (p. 26). In his morphosyntactic description, the author mentions that Brazilians employ <*a gente*> in semi-formal and informal orality with a generic value or for “situationally identified deictic” reference (AZEREDO, 2008, p. 176).

The New Grammar of Brazilian Portuguese, by Castilho (2010), considers <*a gente*> only in the informal register and reinforces that the phenomenon occurs mainly in the oral modality. It is understood that the grammarian in question considers the occurrence of the form <*a gente*> in formal situations to be impractical, which contradicts the result of several current researches that found wide use of the innovative variant in the oral records of many educated individuals, in situations where a variety of prestige would be required, such as lectures from academic events.

As for the Brazilian Portuguese Pedagogical Grammar, by Bagno (2011), there is the emphasis that, in the position of subject of the contemporary BP, the preference is for the term <*a gente*>, mainly by young people, and this use has become more and more spread even in more monitored situations, causing changes in the prestigious urban varieties that now support the rise of a new middle class.

Therefore, there is resistance in the standardized written modality, but not in cultured speech, regardless of whether it is informal or formal.

Sociolinguistic research on variation *We/A gente* in BP

There are many sociolinguistic researches that dealt with the use of the form in competition with the Brazilian variety of Portuguese. One of the first researchers to investigate the alternation between discourse first person of plural pronouns within BP was Omena (1986; 1996).

The growing use of the <*a gente*> form in BP was confirmed by several studies carried out in the scope of Variationist Sociolinguistics, such as the studies carried out by Omena (1996; 2003), Lopes (1996; 2003; 2007), Machado (1995), Maia (2003), Rocha (2009), Mendonça (2010), Vianna (2011), among many other researchers throughout Brazil.

We can see that sociolinguistic studies pointed out the following congruences: (i) young speakers use the form more often; (ii) women welcome more innovation in most

cities; (iii) the higher level of education does not prevent the use of the innovative way. On the other hand, it was noticed that there is a stable variation between the traditional form and the non-stigmatized innovative form. Unfortunately, the normative grammars that serve as the basis for teaching do not describe the pronominal framework of BP according to such research and discredit the usual speech of Brazilians.

Official teaching guidelines and teaching materials

In the opportunity to direct and guide pedagogical practice in Portuguese language classes, the guiding entities of education in Brazil propose documents that provide appropriate language education to the new social configuration of the country. One of the foreseen aspects is the recognition of the variations that exist in our language.

In Brazil, there is a basis that defines the set of essential learning that all students are entitled to in basic education. In the 1988 Constitution, it was already emphasized that education should be guided at the service of the full development of the person, his preparation for the exercise citizenship and their qualification for work.

In 1996, the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB, Portuguese initials) proposed that an agreement be signed with the various levels of government to establish guidelines and competencies capable of guiding curricula. Then, in 1998, the National Curriculum Parameters (PCN, Portuguese initials) became a national reference for the construction of curricular proposals in the different education networks throughout Brazil.

In 2014, the National Education Plan instigated reflection on the need to establish pedagogical guidelines for basic education and the creation of a national base to guide the curricula of all units of the federation, since the PCN only made general proposals that were followed in different ways across the country. Thus, the Common National Curricular Base (BNCC) emerges, in which a curriculum containing a common base with the main competencies required during elementary school becomes mandatory in all public and private schools in the country.

The PCN arose with the intention of proposing a curriculum with national references common to the educational process in all Brazilian regions, in a way that sought to respect the regional, cultural and political diversities existing in Brazil. In the introduction on the topic of linguistic variation, PCNs for the third and fourth cycles of

Elementary Education postulate that the Portuguese language is composed of many varieties and that

the student, upon entering school, already knows at least one of these varieties, the one you learned because you are part of a community of speakers. Certainly, he is able to perceive that the forms of the language vary and that certain expressions or ways of saying may be appropriate for certain circumstances, but not for others. You know, for example, that there are more or less delicate ways of addressing someone, more careful and thoughtful speeches, ceremonial speeches. You may even know that certain speeches are discriminated against and, eventually, even have lived that experience (BRASIL, 1998, p. 81-82).⁶

Therefore, there is a clear indication that students already enter school with the perception of the existence of different varieties of the language. In this sense, we find in the guiding text that “linguistic prejudice, like any other prejudice, results from subjective evaluations of social groups and must be combated with vigor and energy” (BRASIL, 1998, p. 82). The student needs to realize that writing and orality taken as formal constitute another linguistic variety, whose learning will expand his possibilities of interference in the community in which he lives.

Criticisms of prejudiced traditional teaching that discredited orality and non-standard varieties resulted in efforts to revise language teaching practices. Such a review effort resulted in the incorporation of these ideas by a significant number of state and municipal education departments in establishing new curricula and the promotion of teacher formation and improvement courses, including SEEDUC-RJ. However, as PCNs only guided curriculum composition without being mandatory, many curriculum differences were visible across the country. Then the need arises for a Common National Curricular Base (BNCC) that was mandatory throughout Brazil. The document is a mandatory national reference for public and private schools to develop or adapt their curricula aiming “the promotion of a comprehensive education aimed at welcoming, recognizing and fully developing all students, with respect to differences and facing discrimination and prejudice” (BRASIL, 2018, p. 5). It is, therefore, a very directive document that clearly sets out the mandatory curricular components in each segment,

⁶ O aluno, ao entrar na escola, já sabe pelo menos uma dessas variedades. aquela que aprendeu pelo fato de estar inserido em uma comunidade de falantes. Certamente, ele é capaz de perceber que as formas da língua apresentam variação e que determinadas expressões ou modos de dizer podem ser apropriados para certas circunstâncias, mas não para outras. Sabe, por exemplo, que existem formas mais ou menos delicadas de se dirigir a alguém, falas mais cuidadas e refletidas, falas cerimoniais. Pode ser que saiba, inclusive, que certos falares são discriminados e, eventualmente, até ter vivido essa experiência. (BRASIL, 1998, p. 81-82)

specifying what should be studied and what competence will be worked on in a given content.

The linguistic variation approach for the final grades of elementary school in Portuguese classes, appears in the BNCC in the section dealing with specific Portuguese language skills for that segment. The orientation is for the student to be led to understand the language as a cultural, historical, social, variable, heterogeneous phenomenon and sensitive to the contexts of use, capable of building the identity of its users and the community to which they belong. There is also the objective of making the student, when understanding that there are linguistic variations, be respectful and reject linguistic prejudice, realizing that in his social interactions, he should “use the variety and style of language appropriate to the communicative situation, to the interlocutor(s) and the genre of discourse/textual genre” (BRASIL, 2018, p. 85).

In the same way as the national documents that provide for teaching, the Curricular Reorientation (2006), which is an official document of the Rio de Janeiro State Department of Education (SEEDUC, Portuguese initials), aims to rescue the assumptions and guidelines of the PCNs and be based on the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB, Portuguese initials), aiming to contemplate the linguistic varieties that are present in BP. Therefore, the official guidance of the state network is towards teaching Portuguese that takes into account the varying phenomena in the description of the language, in a manner that this should appear in the teacher's practice in the classroom.

The approach to linguistic variation in didactic books (DB)

Despite the many sociolinguistic researches that reveal the Brazilian linguistic reality and official guidelines regarding the approach to linguistic variation in Portuguese language classes, it is clear that the collections of didactic books still have a traditional stamp when addressing the morphosyntactic content, suppressing important phenomena variables from their language descriptions. In the analysis of six collections of textbooks for Elementary Education with greater preference and distribution in the PNLD 2017 through research on the MEC website, it was found that there is no use of linguistic variations in the content presented by the authors.

Freire (2016), in a research on linguistic variation in collections for elementary school, also highlights the same problems:

[...] it was noticed that, although the collections brought chapters or sections in some of the volumes on the topic of linguistic variation, this was not revisited in the rest of the work or in the other volumes, so that the description of morphosyntactic aspects of the language could contemplate the variable phenomena [...]. In view of this, it appears that the presence of the theme “linguistic variation” shows itself only as another “content” in the textbook collections, in order to formally meet the requirements of the PCN and PNLD (FREIRE, 2016, p. 14).⁷

Thus, it is concluded that there is still a long way to go so that the variable phenomena have an appropriate treatment in the didactic textbooks, as the traditional posture is opposed to what the teaching guidelines prescribe, according to which linguistic variation must be addressed, so that the various variants in the realization of a variable phenomenon must be effectively worked in the classroom and not only those prestigious in the canon.

Theoretical foundation

Variationist sociolinguistics

A milestone in the field of studies on linguistic change was made explicit at a conference organized at the University of California (Los Angeles) by William Bright in the 1960s. This conference aimed at relating the linguistic variations to the variations already ongoing on the society at that time. The event brought together several researchers whose studies focused on the relationship between language and society. John Gumperz, Einar Haugen, Dell Hymes, John Fisher, José Pedro Rona and William Labov attended the event (see ALKMIM, 2001, p. 28).

At this conference, the American linguist Willian Labov presented his theory, which was contrary to both the structuralist approach of Saussure and the generative approach of Noam Chomsky, who considered language as an abstract reality, unrelated to historical and social factors, as Coelho *et al.* recall. (2015). Thus, there is a rupture of Labov with the relationship established between structure and synchrony on the one hand,

⁷ [...] percebeu-se que, conquanto as coleções trouxessem capítulos ou seções em algum dos volumes sobre o tema variação linguística, isso não era retomado no restante da obra ou nos demais volumes, de maneira que a descrição de aspectos morfossintáticos da língua pudesse contemplar os fenômenos variáveis[...]. Em vista disso, depreende-se que a presença do tema “variação linguística” se mostra somente como mais um “conteúdo” nas coleções de livros didáticos, a fim de atender formalmente à exigência dos PCN e do PNLD. (FREIRE,2016, p. 14)

and evolutionary history and diachrony on the other, also bringing synchrony and diachrony closer to the notions of language structure and functioning.

Labov considered language to be a heterogeneous system that has categorical or variable rules. Such variable rules can be more or less applied, depending on the linguistic or social environment. According to the researcher, explanations for the choice of speakers by one or another linguistic variant are sought by controlling 51 conditioning factors (independent variables) that have a probabilistic nature in which quantitative techniques are used to observe the regularities that govern the variable.

As stated by Coelho *et al.* (2015, p. 17) Labovian variation research works with statistical results and deals with issues such as linguistic variation and change, bilingualism, linguistic contact, minority languages, linguistic politics and planning, among others. This branch of linguistic science deals with the relationship between language and society, as well as the study of the structure and evolution of language within the social context of the speech community.

For Coelho *et al.* (2015), this Labovian perspective specifies that there is nothing in the variant forms used in the realization of a linguistic variable that allows to affirm that some are better or more correct than the others, since they are coexisting for the same meaning in the speech communities. Such variants are subject to structural and social conditions that influence their degree of occurrence, that is, they regulate our choice between one or the other variant. The first group of conditions, structural or linguistic, includes aspects related to the structural context of the language, such as the order of the constituents, the category of words or the constructions involved, in addition to semantic aspects, among others. Social or extralinguistic conditionings, on the other hand, refer to social aspects, which usually include sex/gender, educational level and age group of the informant. Regarding the phenomenon <*a gente*> and you>, Coelho *et al.* (2015) state:

Many linguistic conditioners have been shown to be relevant in these studies. Some of a syntactic nature, such as the subject's filling, for example. Both results of work on the alternation between we and *a gente* and results on the alternation between thou and you show that the pronouns *a gente* and you, by combining with verbs in the third person singular (*a gente* went and you went), tend to appear with a filled subject, while we and thou pronouns, when they carry the morphic mark of the first person of the plural and second person of the singular, respectively, come preferentially with null subjects (COELHO *et al.*, 2015, p. 61)⁸.

⁸ Muitos condicionadores linguísticos se mostraram relevantes nesses estudos. Alguns de natureza sintática, como o preenchimento do sujeito, por exemplo. Tanto resultados de trabalhos sobre a alternância entre nós

Therefore, Variationist Sociolinguistics aims to investigate the variation and change of language in the social context of the speech community, based on the assumption that there is no homogeneity in any language, since the intrinsic experiences of each group will create the linguistic repertoire that will always be heterogeneous, so that if it doesn't, it will be a dysfunction, an anomaly.

According to Coan and Freitag (2010), the heterogeneity proclaimed by Labov is one whose variation can be systematically explained, that is, two statements that refer to the same state of affairs with the same truth value are constituted as variants of the same variable (variable rule). In this perspective, the variable focused on this research is the expression of P4, whose candidate variants for its realization are the traditional pronoun <we> and the grammatical form <a gente>, that is, both variants have the same value in the sense that express the same notion in BP.

The linguistic variation continuums

To understand the phenomenon of linguistic variation in BP, Bortoni-Ricardo (2004) proposes three imaginary or continuous lines, namely, urbanization, oral-literacy and stylistic monitoring. In this work we will adopt the orality-literacy continuum, as we understand that it is the one that best applies to the variable phenomenon that we will address in pedagogical mediation: the co-occurrence of variants or the selection of the prestige form <we> are directly linked to the communication event: orality events register both, while those marked with the [+ literacy] line, especially those located at that end of the continuum, select the prestigious variant. The proposal of the orality-literacy continuum by Bortoni-Ricardo (2004) was, therefore, the foundation of the methodology that we use for the distribution of the textual genres with which we work in the pedagogical mediation to variation *we/a gente*, in addition to the process of retextualization.

The grammaticalization of <a gente>

e a gente como resultados sobre a alternância entre tu e você mostram que os pronomes a gente e você, por se combinarem com verbos na terceira pessoa do singular (a gente foi e você foi), tendem a aparecer com sujeito preenchido, enquanto pronomes nós e tu, quando carregam a marca morfológica de primeira pessoa do plural e segunda pessoa do singular, respectivamente, vêm preferencialmente com sujeitos nulos. (COELHO et al., 2015, p. 61)

Grammaticalization belongs to the universe of linguistic changes and variations, being characterized when a lexical item starts to perform grammatical functions or a grammatical item comes to assume even more grammatical functions. For Lopes (2004), the grammatical form <a gente> persists in the verb agreement for the third person singular, even maintaining the indeterminate and collective character of the primitive name, although it activates a semantic-discursive interpretation of the first person [+I].

Regarding this change in the syntactic plane, linguist Menon (1997) characterizes the various stages of grammaticalization of <a gente>, from the nominal phrase (NP) to the category of pronoun, as shown in the table below:

Table 1 - Phases of grammaticalization of <a gente>

Full NP >	Special NP >	Invariable NP>	indeterminate pronoun>	personal pronoun P1
gente >	a gente >	[a gente] >	a gente >	a gente = we, I
FNP	SNP	INP	indet. pr.	per. Pr. 1 pl. ~ sing.

Fonte: Menon, 1997, p. 398.

The grammaticalization of <a gente> further contributed to the fact that BP changed from a null subject language to a full subject language, as described by Duarte (1993).

What is retextualization?

As in one of the stages of pedagogical mediation, it was proposed to retextualize one genre to another. Marcuschi (2001) states that retextualization is not “a mechanical process, but requires knowledge of gender, support, becoming a complex operation that interferes both in the code and in the sense” (p. 46). The researcher postulates that orality and writing are at the same level of importance in the communicative process and mainly in retextualization, in which the oral text is transcoded into the written version.

Thus, the researcher listed several operations for the retextualization to take place, however he clarified that “for a retextualization to be successful, it is not necessary that all operations are carried out and, above all, not necessarily in the proposed order” (p. 76). Thus, the first four operations follow the rules of *regularization and idealization*, which aim to exclude marks from orality and the addition of elements of writing or replacement by them. The other operations follow the transformation rules that, according

to the author, are the ones that promote the most significant changes in the base text, being the following: substitution, selection, addition, reordering and condensation strategies, which will interfere in the stylistic treatment of the text, being those that properly characterize the retextualization process.

Dell'Isola (2007) conceives retextualization as a change from one genre to another genre, that is, an original text would undergo changes when changing from the starting genre to another type of destination genre, maintaining, however, the core of the originating content.

Research methodology

The methodology we used was that of action research (see TRIPP, 2005), since our research object was a problem (in this case, the mastery of different writing norms from those located in the [+ orality] pole to those of the pole of [+ literacy] of the continuum) in which those involved in the process - teacher-researcher and students - collaborated to reach the objective. Tripp (2005) proposes that action research be seen as one of the many different forms of action research, which consists of any continuous, systematic and empirically grounded attempt to improve practice, thus producing information and knowledge for more effective use, which promotes conditions for actions and changes in situations within the school itself.

Likewise, Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988, *apud* ELIA; SAMPAIO, 2001), understand action research as a

form of investigation based on a collective self-reflection undertaken by the participants of a social group in order to improve the rationality and fairness of their own social and educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations where these practices happen. The approach is that of action research only when it is collaborative (p. 248).⁹

School profile

⁹ forma de investigação baseada em uma autorreflexão coletiva empreendida pelos participantes de um grupo social de maneira a melhorar a racionalidade e a justiça de suas próprias práticas sociais e educacionais, como também o seu entendimento dessas práticas e de situações onde essas práticas acontecem. A abordagem é de uma pesquisa-ação apenas quando ela é colaborativa (p. 248).

The action research was carried out at the Integrated Center for Public Education (Ciep, Portuguese initials) Brizolão 053 Dr. Nelson dos Santos Gonçalves, who belongs to the state education network of Rio de Janeiro. It is located on the outskirts of Volta Redonda, a medium-sized city in the interior of the state, whose economy is based on commercial activities, small industries and, mainly, around the National Steel Company (CSN, Portuguese initials), one of the largest steel complexes in the world¹⁰.

The school is located in a complex surrounded by middle class neighborhoods and slums, therefore with a great diversity in the socioeconomic level of the students. However, the last Brazil evaluation held, in which the students' socioeconomic level is contextualized, placed CIEP 053's clientele in the upper middle level.¹¹

In the present work we use as a theoretical support to achieve our goals, the orality-literacy continuum proposed by Bortoni-Ricardo (2004), in which we organize the genres selected for pedagogical mediation in retextualization activities according to Marcuschi (2001). This retextualization involved written texts, however located in different points of the continuum: the experience report, located more on the orality; the report, belonging to the pole of writing or literacy. Therefore, the retextualization approached in our pedagogical mediation was very close to the proposed activities developed by Dell'Isola (2007), which started from one genre to another, but within the same modality, in this case, writing. In this way, students were led to realize the use of P4 variants in the transition from one genre with traces of orality to another belonging to the literacy pole of the continuum.

As for the retextualization operations listed by Marcuschi (2001), we worked on those that constitute rules of transformation, considering that the starting text was a written production by the students themselves that should be converted into another genre also written, so that it dealt exactly with the passage from a spoken textual sequence to the written code, which would be included in the first four operations, framed in the rules of regularization and idealization. We work with the 7th and 8th operations in applied pedagogical mediation. The 7th operation was used so that the stylistic treatment given to the report considered the selection of new syntactic structures, new lexical options, which constitutes the substitution strategy aiming at a greater formality, required by the

¹⁰ According to information obtained on the company's own website, whose link for consultation is as follows: http://www.csn.com.br/conteudo_pti.asp?idioma=0&conta=45&tipo=60023. Access: April 23 2018.

¹¹ Second result of the *Prova Brasil* survey sent to the school by MEC.

destination textual genre, which relinquishes subjectivities, adjectives and other structures present in the experience report. In the 8th operation, students were taken to order the topics and reorganize the sequence of the text produced, structuring it to suit the new genre, that is, they condensed ideas and kept only the essentials that would fit in the arrival text.

During the retextualization activities, we followed with the students the tasks proposed by Dell'Isola for this process, such as reading; understanding the text read; gender identification; retextualization; the conference, (checking whether the text produced meets the conditions of production and is faithful to the content of the text read); the identification of the characteristics of the genre-product of retextualization; rewriting, guided by conference and identification. Thus, we allow students to reflect on language and on the relationship between genders and social structures, according to the author's proposition.

The pedagogical mediation proposed in this action research included seven stages that moved between motivations, productions, corrections, rewriting and retextualization.

After the completion of the workshops applied in pedagogical mediation, an essay contest was held whose jurors belonged to the school's faculty. The five best experiences report productions retextualized for the report genre were chosen.

For the award, there was a closing party for the project, in which all students in the class could participate and see, through slides, from the initial productions to the final productions. The most memorable moments of the project were recalled at the event.

In this event, there was the participation of the management and pedagogical team, as well as some teachers. We read the essays of the top three, so that the students were not only motivated and satisfied, but also felt prestigious.

Conclusions

In view of the applied pedagogical mediation, which sought to address the variation in the expression of P4 from the perspective of the continuous orality-literacy proposed by Bortoni-Ricardo (2004), we now compare the results obtained, from the initial production (diagnosis) to the production final evaluation of the objectives of this research. The trajectory of the variants was stable throughout the continuum, that is, there

was a prevalence of canonical and small infiltration of the innovative variant, which is explained by the fact that they are written texts.

The students' productions showed that the variant <a gente> is also present in writing as a competitor of <we>, in all points of the continuum since there was an occurrence even in the representative genre of the [+ literacy] pole, which contradicts the writing practice of Brazilian literate society, which avoids this variant in genres representative of this pole, constituting a discontinuous feature, in the terms of Bortoni-Ricardo (2004). Although the innovative variant appeared in the students' reports, its occurrence was very marginal, which in a way brought the class closer to the practice of Brazilian literate society, which honors the traditional variant in literacy events.

In short, even analyzing the three productions without rewriting, significant differences have already been observed between the points of the continuum in which they are located. In the production of the diagnosis, we found the hybrid use of the variants in the expression of P4, compatible with the characteristics of speech, including stigmatized constructions involving both <a gente> and <we>:

(61) We felt very happy [...] (S.M.B. – fem.)

(62) After there *a gente* went to the zoo and then to eat [...] (S.M.B. – fem.)¹²

At the stage when the students produced the experience report on the visit to the asylum, the frequency index of the <a gente> variant was similar to that of the initial production, but with an important qualitative difference: non-canonical verbal concordance with <a gente> practically disappeared, giving way to the use of prestige verbal concordance, which denotes progress towards the desired proficiency in relation to the object of this research. In fact, the cultured Brazilian already uses the innovative variant for P4 expression in written texts not located in the [+ literacy] pole, as in chronicles, experience reports, among other genres, but does not admit this use in written texts located in the pole of greater literacy of the continuum, such as the report.

Finally, at the stage when they produced the report, there was a greater concern among students to use a language characteristic of this genre, that is, closer to communication events mediated by writing (see BORTONI-RICARDO, 2004), having the semi-categorical use of the traditional pronoun in the expression of P4.

¹² (61) Nós se sentiu muito feliz[...] (S.M.B. – fem.)

(62) Depois de lá a gente fomos para o zoológico e depois fomos comer[...] (S.M.B. – fem.)

Thus, we can say that, through applied pedagogical mediation, 9th grade students (901) of Ciep 053 in VR demonstrated that they understand that they can use in the representative writing of communication events not located in the [+ literacy] pole, like the experience report, contrary to the traditional school practice that does not allow the use of this variant in any written text. On the other hand, the same students also realized the need to select the canonical variant in genres with a higher degree of literacy, such as the report.

The results obtained in this research showed the importance of the action of educational institutions not only for learning the norm prescribed by the grammatical tradition, but also for the possibility of admitting and contextualizing the use of other variants used by speakers. Such variants should not be discriminated against, being even desirable in certain points of the orality-literacy continuum, as is the case of the P4 expression represented by <a gente> which has been increasing its scope every day, infiltrating even the writing.

Final considerations

This research sought to investigate and analyze the occurrence of the candidate variants for the representation of P4 in texts of students of the 9th grade of Elementary School, through the application of a pedagogical mediation that led students to a reflection on the use of these variants, whether in texts with a higher degree of literacy such as the report, either in texts closer to orality such as the experience report.

The present work seeks to offer a contribution to the teaching of Portuguese Language with regard to the approach of linguistic variation in the classroom from sequentially planned activities in order to overcome two opposing teaching practices in the treatment of this phenomenon: one that ignores the pronoun <a gente>, labeling it as inappropriate to any form of written expression; another that is exempt from any grammatical description in Portuguese language classes. Through applied pedagogical mediation, we realized that it is possible to present the contexts of occurrence of both variants without discriminating the different varieties of the language, thus carrying out the approach of linguistic variation according to the official guidelines for teaching (PCN and BNCC).

The survey of the variants used for the representation of P4 in texts produced by the students throughout the orality-literacy continuum was made from the experience report until the report's fabrication. At the same time, students were able to effectively and practically observe the distinction of the different poles and were led to recognize the contexts of use of the variants at each point of the continuum, in order to develop the ability to move from representative texts of the [+ orality] pole to those of the [+ literacy] pole, which ended up confirming the hypothesis formulated for this research.

The data collected in the diagnosis already revealed that students in the 9th grade of elementary school already had a perception of the prestigious linguistic uses in writing, given the high frequency of the canonical variant and null subjects, however there was a mixture of traditional and innovative uses in the expression of P4, so that they showed insecurity when choosing which variant they should use in their later productions. However, this problem was extensively addressed in the course of pedagogical mediation with a view to solving it, and in the end, students appropriated the ability to adapt and acquired greater security in the use of variants depending on the requirement of textual genres determined by the point of continuous orality-literacy in which they are located.

The proposal intended in this research of not to stick to a traditional and prejudiced teaching was the driving force throughout the course of research and application of pedagogical mediation. It became evident that the use of <a gente> is widespread even in academic circles with regard to orality, with presence also in the writing not situated in the literacy pole, being avoided only in written texts of the literate culture, which showed the usefulness to work with the continuous orality-literacy of Bortoni-Ricardo (2004). Thus, our aim was not to discriminate one variant for the benefit of another, but to make the student aware of the distribution of the use of both both in the oral and in the written form of the BP.

We realized that students appropriated this knowledge based on what they learned during the course of pedagogical mediation and also on the linguistic knowledge acquired throughout school life. Our goal of showing them the different possibilities of making P4 in its canonical and variational form in texts from different points in the continuum culminated in a positive and satisfactory balance. The students showed that the experience report can include both variants, unlike the report genre, which selects only the canonical pronoun for the first person plural expression. Therefore, we assess that the students achieved the objectives proposed by this research during the activities, both in relation to

the structure of each textual genre studied, and in relation to the representation of P4, recognizing the use of each variant in the different genres.

In this way, we hope that this work will be useful to professionals and students that aim at teaching that addresses the linguistic variation inserted within the dynamism of our language in its varied norms. Every speaker must have the necessary knowledge to move between the different varieties, in order to attend to the different communicative events, mediated by both speech and writing.

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