



Evaluation of the pronouns ‘a gente’ and ‘tu’ and of the grammatical patterns of agreement¹

Avaliação dos pronomes ‘a gente’ e ‘tu’ e dos padrões gramaticais de concordância

Josilene de Jesus Mendonça

Universidade Federal de Sergipe (UFS), São Cristóvão, Sergipe/Brazil
mendoncajosilene@gmail.com

Andréia Silva Araujo

Universidade Federal de Sergipe (UFS), São Cristóvão, Sergipe/Brazil
Universidade Estadual de Santa Cruz (UESC), Ilhéus, Bahia/Brazil
andreialuzinete@hotmail.com

Abstract: We present results of a comparative study of beliefs about (i) the pronominal forms *a gente* (“we”) and *tu* (“you”) and (ii) the social evaluation of nonstandard verbal agreement with these two pronouns by a group of students from the Federal University of Sergipe (Itabaiana-SE). We discuss the methodological advances in the use of the Iramuteq software, through a multidimensional analysis of beliefs and linguistic attitudes. A survey was designed to measure the attitudes towards the following grammatical patterns: i) *a gente* (“we”); ii) *tu* (“you”); iii) *a gente vivemos* (“we 1PL live 1PL”); and iv) *tu vai* (“you 2SG go 3SG”). The results reveal that the students’ perception of grammatical patterns is based on dimensions of standardization and vitality; they attribute two types of social values to the linguistic forms: cultural (common, habitual, strange, normal) and normative (correct, wrong). The form *a gente vivemos* (“we live-1PP”) seems to be the only one to which stigma is attached in the community. The results also reveal that the students link these forms to notions of social adequacy both to the interactional context and to the speech community. The analysis

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with Iramuteq represents a methodological advance for perception studies, by enabling comparability between the vocabulary used by the students and the linguistic forms under evaluation, and providing an objective, reliable statistical analysis.

Keywords: grammatical patterns; variation; linguistic attitudes.

Resumo: Apresentamos os resultados de um estudo comparativo entre crenças relativas às formas pronominais *a gente* e *tu* e a avaliação social da concordância não padrão com tais formas por um grupo de universitários da Universidade Federal de Sergipe. A partir de uma análise multidimensional das crenças por meio do Iramuteq, objetivamos discutir as vantagens metodológicas do uso desse software para estudos de atitudes linguísticas. Um questionário foi desenvolvido para mensurar as atitudes acerca dos seguintes padrões gramaticais: i) *a gente*; ii) *tu*; iii) *a gente vivemos*; e iv) *tu vai*. Os resultados evidenciam que a percepção dos universitários em relação aos padrões gramaticais considerados baseia-se nas dimensões de padronização e vitalidade, atribuindo às formas linguísticas dois tipos de valores sociais: cultural (comum, costume, estranho, normal) e normativo (correto, errado). Dentre as formas linguísticas avaliadas, apenas *a gente vivemos* parece carregar estigma na comunidade, com avaliação negativa. Os resultados mostram também que os universitários atrelam o uso dos padrões gramaticais avaliados à noção de normas sociais de adequação ao contexto interacional e à comunidade de fala. A análise com o Iramuteq representa um ganho metodológico para os estudos de percepção, pois, além de permitir a comparabilidade entre o vocabulário utilizado pelos participantes e as formas linguísticas sob avaliação, oferece uma análise estatisticamente sólida, confiável e objetiva.

Palavras-chave: padrões gramaticais; variação; atitudes linguísticas.

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1 Introduction

In Brazilian Portuguese (BP), the second person singular (2SG) may appear as the canonic form *tu* ‘you’, as in (1), or as the emergent form *você* ‘you’, as in (2). This type of variation involving subject pronouns in BP is not restricted to the second person of speech, but it also characterizes the first person plural (1PL), which may appear as the canonic form *nós* ‘we’ (3) or as the emergent pronoun *a gente* ‘we’ (4).

- (1) *Aquela comédia O Alto da Compadecida eu gosto muito dela... Eu acho bem engraçado... assim, é uma estória de eu não sei nem explicar... Andréia... direito (hes) porque é uma estória engraçada... né? Tu já assistiu?*

‘That comedy *O Auto da Compadecida* I like a lot... I think it is quite funny... like, it is a story about I can’t even explain... Andreia, because it is a funny story, right? Have you watched it?’

Tu já assistiu?

2SG already watch-3SG

- (2) *Olha... Geralmente, se tiver um conhecido que lhe indique às vezes você chega lá... aí você tem uma capacidade maior do que o outro mas só porque aquele é mais conhecido... mais isso... acaba contratando o outro e deixando você de fora*

‘Look... In general, if there is an acquaintance that suggests your name you sometimes get there... then you are in a greater capacity than somebody else, but only for being more well-known... it’s more about that... they end up hiring that other guy and leaving you behind’

Às vezes você chega lá

At time 2SG arrive-3SG there

‘Sometimes you get there’

Você tem uma capacidade maior do que o outro

2SG have-3SG a capacity bigger than the other

‘You are in a greater capacity than the other’

Deixando você de fora

Leaving 2SG of out

‘Leaving you behind’

- (3) *É porque é assim nós tá num mundo né... Andréia... que cada vez mais vem aumentando a violência né?*

‘It is because it’s like that we are in a world, right, Andreia? where violence is increasing more and more, right?’

Nós tá num mundo

1PL be-3SG in-a world

‘We are in a world’

- (4) *Quando a gente vai entrar aqui na universidade a gente imagina uma coisa totalmente diferente... né?*

‘When we are about to enter the university, we have a completely different idea of what it is like, right?’

Quando a gente vai entrar na universidade

When 1PL go-3SG enter at-the university

‘When we are about to enter the university’

A gente imagina

1PL imagine-3SG

‘We imagine’

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The emergence of *você* and *a gente* as pronominal forms in BP led to linguistic variation/change in the pronominal system of the language. This process also triggered other linguistic phenomena at various language levels (cf. LOPES, 2007), such as subject-verb agreement, which has been the focus of a number of studies over the years (NARO, 1981; BAXTER; LUCCHESI, 1993; LOREGIAN-PENKAL, 1996; SCHERRE; NARO, 1997; NARO; GÖRSKI; FERNANDES, 1999;

² These examples were extracted from the speech corpus built by the authors. This data base was composed by 80 sociolinguistic interviews of university students from the Universidade Federal de Sergipe. The codes identify the sociolinguistic interview, indicating the number, the sample (community and year of the recording) and the social stratification of the informant (movement in function of the university, term, initials of the informant, sex, level of schooling, and age respectively).

HAUSEN, 2000; MONGUILHOT; COELHO, 2002; SCHERRE; NARO, 2014; FREITAG, 2016, among many others).

Research about subject-verb agreement in spoken BP has demonstrated that, through a process of gramaticalization, the insertion of these forms into the pronominal paradigm has changed the paradigm of verbal inflection – from six different forms [*eu vivo* (“I 1SG live 1SG”), *tu vives* (“you 2SG live 2SG”), *ele/ela vive* (“he/she 3SG lives 3SG”), *nós vivemos* (“we 1PL live 1PL”), *vós viveis* (“you 2PL live 2PL”), *eles/elas vivem* (“they 3PL live 3PL”)] to only two: [*eu vivo* (“I 1SG live 1SG”), *tu* (“you 2SG”)/ *você* (“you SG”)/ *vocês* (“you 2PL”)/ *ele, ela* (“he, she 3SG”)/ *eles, elas* (“they 3PL”)/ *a gente* (“we 1PL”)/ *nós* (“we 1PL”) *vive* (“live 3SG”)]. This indicates that “Brazilian Portuguese is in a clear process of loss of verbal inflection” (SILVA, 1998, p. 190). Furthermore, in the expression of first-person plural, the subject-verb agreement may be expressed not only with the omission of *-mos* [*nós vive-Ø* (“we 1PL live 3SG”)], but also with */-s/* deletion [*nós vivemo-Ø* (“we 1PL live 1PL”), or with vowel alternation [*nós cantamos ~ cantemos* (“we 1PL live 1PL ~ live 1PL”)] (cf. CASTILHO, 1992; PEREIRA; LEHMKUHL-COELHO, LOREGIAN-PENKAL, 2016; PEREIRA, 2018). Differently from the prescribed normative tradition – which considers subject-verb agreement as a categorical rule – this clearly constitutes a variable in non-standard BP (CAMACHO 1993, p. 104). In this article, we will henceforth refer to non-standard 2SG subject-verb agreement as *tu-VØ*. For the combination between *a gente* and the verb inflected as first-person plural [*a gente vivemos* (“we 1PL live 1PL”)], we will use *a gente-Vmos*, which is also non-standard.

The expression of subject-verb agreement is one of the most sociolinguistically salient phenomena for speakers/hearers. Based on distributional patterns, in the expression of first-person plural, for example, the covariation between the *nós/a gente* and the presence/absence of number-person inflection *-mos* ‘1PL’, points to a social stigma towards *a gente-Vmos*, which is associated with less educated speakers (FREITAG, 2016). *Tu-VØ*, which also diverges from the canonic pattern, is characterized as incorrect in the normative tradition. These forms can then be taken as part of a stigmatized linguistic phenomenon, depending on the indexical meaning attributed to them locally, in the community (OUSHIRO, 2015).

Variable 1PL pronouns (canonic vs. emergent), variable reference to 2SG (*tu* vs. *você*), and variable subject-verb agreement are all interconnected as grammatical patterns, and all identified and evaluated by speakers/hearers. According to Cargile et al. (1994), attitudes towards language phenomena relate to the immediate social situation, culturally perceived features, interpersonal histories of the interlocutors and the speaker's and the hearer's social characteristics. Among other culturally perceived features, the degree of standardization and vitality of the variants are significant to the evaluation of grammatical patterns. The standardization is a static dimension related to the compilation of dictionaries and grammar books, as well as the promotion of certain varieties by the social elite and the government. Vitality is a more dynamic dimension and is related to the reach and importance of the variety, as well as the social pressures driving changes in language use (CARGILE et al., 1994).

In the linguistic samples from the university belonging to the data base *Falares Sergipanos* (FREITAG, 2013), the expression of the 1PL is very often made with *a gente*, otherwise, non-standard *nós-Vø* and *a gente-Vmos* are infrequent (cf. FREITAG, 2016). The expression of 2SG is more frequently made with *você/cê*, which indicates that this community is part of a subsystem *você/ tu-Vø* (cf. SCHERRE, et al., 2015).

Based on these introductory facts, this article poses the following questions: What perceptions and beliefs in relation to the use of pronouns *a gente* and *tu* do university students hold? Do these students' perceptions and beliefs change when these pronouns are employed with non-standard agreement (*a gente-Vmos*, *tu-Vø*)? How do they evaluate these patterns in reference to beliefs about use, metalinguistic judgment, region, education and prejudice?

In order to answer these questions, we interviewed 60 students from the Federal University of Sergipe, in Northeastern Brazil, using a questionnaire to assess their opinions and attitudes towards *a gente* and *tu*, as pronouns, and *a gente-Vmos* and *tu-Vø* as non-standard subject-verb agreement structures. These questions are displayed and justified in section 3, after a brief overview of what we consider key theoretical standpoints for our analysis (section 2). In the remaining sections, we analyze the data we collected, with the Iramuteq software – an interface of R, used for multidimensional analysis of texts (CAMARGO; JUSTO, 2013).

Hypothetically, the students' beliefs about *a gente* are more positive than those related to *tu*, considering how frequent *a gente* is. On the other hand, the use of *tu-Vø* would be less negatively evaluated, differently from *a gente-Vmos*. We also expect that the students believe they use *a gente-Vmos* and *tu-Vø*, and that they associate these forms with people at lower levels of education and who live in specific regions of the country. In addition, we also look into whether they consider that people who use these grammatical forms are subjected to prejudice.

2 Linguistic attitudes and perception of linguistic variables

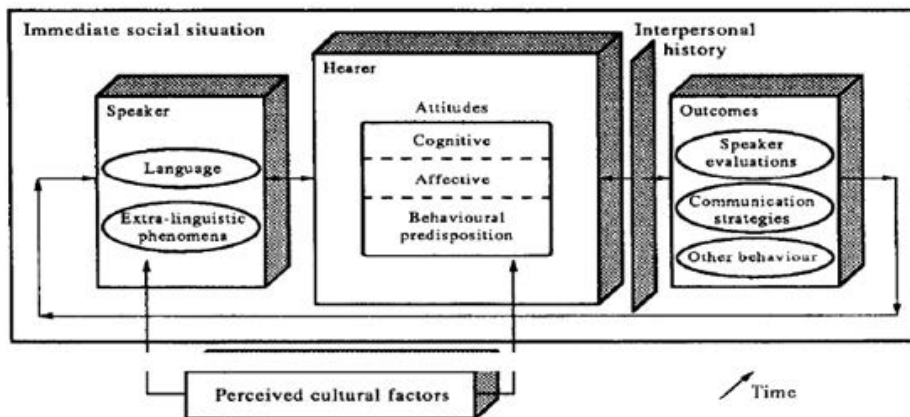
Language variables are subject to social evaluation; positive or negative values are more or less consciously attributed to them. The social meanings relating to linguistic behaviors encompass the salience of the variant on three levels: structural, distributional, and socio-cognitive (FREITAG, 2018). However, structural and distributional salience do not always reflect the social perception of the phenomenon. For instance, linguistic facts with high frequency in a community may not be marked from the social point of view. Only variables that are salient from a socio-cognitive perspective tend to be consistently indexed to specific social profiles.

Linguistic attitudes comprise beliefs, feelings, and actions (cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions respectively) (GARRETT, 2010). Beliefs are socially formed from intergroup relationships and from linguistic and social experiences. Considering the cognitive dimension of linguistic attitudes, beliefs are also formed through formal education. The affective dimension of attitudes consists of the resulting emotions of the contacts with linguistic varieties. There is an interrelation between the cognitive and affective dimensions, since beliefs may interfere with the feelings towards a certain linguistic variant (CARGILE *et al.*, 1994). The behavioral dimension of linguistic attitudes relates to the actions which come from beliefs and feelings towards a linguistic variant. This dimension may also be influenced by other factors related to the current social norms in the community.

Based on these considerations, Cargile *et al.* (1994) developed a model of linguistic attitudes as a social process. As shown in Figure 1, this model takes into account various components: linguistic attitudes, the

immediate social situation, cultural factors, the interpersonal histories of the interlocutors, and the social characteristics of hearers and speakers. The immediate social situation has consequences for linguistic attitudes because negatively evaluated linguistic forms in one social situation may be positively evaluated in another.

FIGURE 1 – Model of linguistic attitudes as a social process



Source: CARGILE *et al.*, 1994, p. 214.

Linguistic attitudes are also subject to political, historical, and economical realities – cultural factors that are part of the macro-context of the interactive situation. In this macro-context, there are two interrelated dimensions, as we mentioned in the introduction: standardization and vitality.

Standardization is related to the influence of normative instruments in the coding, adoption, and promotion of a linguistic variety. It is a static dimension, defined by grammar handbooks and dictionaries, as well as by the linguistic norms disseminated by the socioeconomic elite, the government, the media and the school.

On the other hand, vitality is a more dynamic dimension of the social-structural context. It is related to the reach and importance of a linguistic variety and to the social pressures directing changes in language use. This dimension is formed by speakers' status (economic, social, political, and historical), by the demographic force of the linguistic

variety, and also by the institutional support for the maintenance of the linguistic variety.

The perception of these two dimensions by speakers and hearers contributes to the constitution of linguistic attitudes towards a variety. These concepts were initially developed in reference to multilingualism (STEWART, 1968), but they also apply to the evaluation of variants inside a linguistic variety, since standardization and vitality contribute to the prestige or stigma of a variant.

Along with the dimensions of standardization and vitality, the social norms established by social groups offer a basis for linguistic judgements. In other words, evaluations of linguistic behaviors reflect the status, prestige, or adequacy with which they are conventionally associated within a given speech community.

The interpersonal histories of interlocutors enable a reduction of uncertainty in interaction: hearers have expectations about the forms and linguistic styles that speakers will use in specific contexts. In more familiar situations, the stereotypical readings are set aside in deference to individual interpersonal histories. Therefore, conventional attitudes are more likely to affect the behavior of hearers in contexts of lower familiarity (CARGILE *et al.*, 1994, p. 223).

The social characteristics of speakers and hearers also affect the process of developing linguistic attitudes. The way a speaker is perceived is important in determining the linguistic attitudes of the hearer. For example, ethnicity, region, gender and age of the speaker may interact with linguistic behaviors to produce different evaluative reactions. The hearer's affiliations to social groups also interact with the speaker's attributes, yielding distinct linguistic attitudes. Therefore, Cargile et al. (1994) propose that hearers' interpretations of their own social identities can be considered as a variable in the process of forming linguistic attitudes.

Linguistic attitudes also suggest communication strategies, for instance, processes of linguistic accommodation, characterized by the realignment of patterns of codes and selections of language related to beliefs, attitudes, and underlying social-structural conditions (GILES; COUPLAND; COUPLAND, 1991).

The development of linguistic attitudes as a social process affect and is affected by various elements in a virtually infinite and

recursive way (CARGILE *et al.*, 1994). The study of linguistic attitudes is extremely important for sociolinguistics because it enables analyses of the emergence and endurance of group stereotypes, individuals' position within social groups, and relationships between individuals and between different groups (GARRETT; COUPLAND; WILLIAMS, 2003), contributing to the understanding of social factors involved in the processes of variation and linguistic change.

In addition to the various factors involved in linguistic attitudes, their analysis itself requires methodological rigor. The Iramuteq software enables multidimensional analysis of texts, and transforms qualitative data into quantitative information. The Correspondence Factorial Analysis (CFA) performed by Iramuteq enables the graphic representation of beliefs about linguistic variants, which represents an advance for the study of linguistic attitudes, to the extent that it permits a more objective analysis.

3 Methodological procedures

In order to collect data regarding beliefs about *a gente* and *tu*, and about non-standard agreement with the pronouns, we prepared a questionnaire composed of five evaluation parameters: i) students' beliefs about their own linguistic use; ii) judgements about *a gente*, *tu*, *a gente-Vmos* and *tu-Vø*; iii) relations between the linguistic forms and the student's regional origins; iv) perceptions about the influence of education in the use of these forms; and v) linguistic prejudice related to these forms. The questionnaire consisted of 20 yes-no and open questions, five per linguistic form, as Chart 1 displays. Data were collected individually, through an audio recording of the informants' answers.

CHART 1 – Attitude questionnaire

- 1- Do you say *a gente*?
- 2- What do you think about saying *a gente*?
- 3- Do you think that saying *a gente* is typical anywhere in Brazil? Where?
- 4- Do you think that saying *a gente* has anything to do with one's level of schooling? Why?
- 5- Do you think that people who say *a gente* are subject to prejudice? Why?
- 6- Do you say *a gente vivemos*?
- 7- What do you think about saying *a gente vivemos*?
- 8- Do you think that saying *a gente vivemos* is typical anywhere in Brazil? Where?
- 9- Do you think that saying *a gente vivemos* has anything to do with one's level of schooling? Why?
- 10- Do you think that people who say *a gente vivemos* are subject to any prejudice? Why?
- 11- Do you say *tu*?
- 12- What do you think about saying *tu*?
- 13- Do you think that saying *tu* is typical anywhere in Brazil? Where?
- 14- Do you think that saying *tu* has anything to do with one's level of schooling? Why?
- 15- Do you think that people who say *tu* are subject to any prejudice? Why?
- 16- Do you say *tu vai*?
- 17- What do you think about saying *tu vai*?
- 18- Do you think that saying *tu vai* is typical say anywhere in Brazil? Where?
- 19- Do you think that saying *tu vai* has anything to do with one's level of schooling? Why?
- 20- Do you think that people who say *tu vai* are subject to any prejudice? Why?

We contacted 60 students from the Federal University of Sergipe, stratified according to sex (30 women and 30 men). Beliefs about each form in relation to regional factors, education, and linguistic prejudice were gathered from the yes-no questions. The students' perceptions in relation to region, education and prejudice were observed both through their responses to yes-no and open questions. Evaluations on the pronominal forms and their respective non-standard agreements were obtained through open questions.

For the responses to yes-no questions, we performed a frequency analysis in R. Other answers were transcribed, edited, and submitted for lexical analysis through the Iramuteq software³ – an interface of R, used for multidimensional analysis of texts (CAMARGO; JUSTO, 2013). Editing the texts consisted of a thorough proofreading, and incorporating a command line for each answer (indicating the informant, the informant's sex, and the linguistic form).

From statistic calculations based on vocabulary, Iramuteq reorganizes the structure of a text or set of texts. To measure students' beliefs about *a gente*, *tu*, *a gente-Vmos*, and *tu-Vø*, we performed a Correspondence Factorial Analysis (CFA), considering four textual *corpora*, according to: i) evaluation of the forms; ii) perception related to region; iii) perception related to level of schooling; and iv) prejudice. The CFA generates a graphic representation relating the vocabulary to the selected variable for analysis.

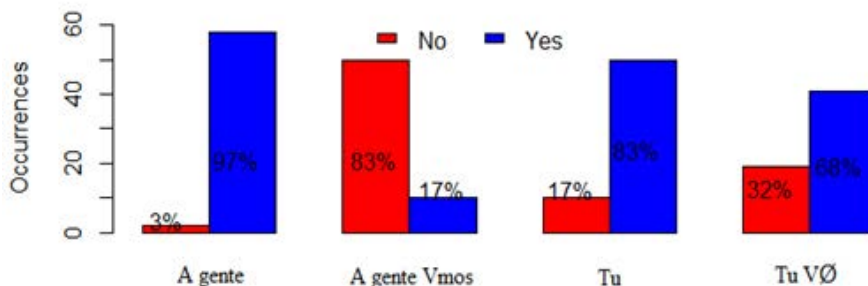
From a contingency table set at a minimum frequency of 10, the CFA presents the intersection between the vocabulary used by the students to express their beliefs and the linguistic variable. We calculated the error in correlation between the terms used in the answers and the linguistic forms. In addition to CFA, we also performed a Specification Analysis of the terms “custom”, “wrong”, and “strange”, used by the students to characterize the linguistic forms. The Specification Analysis associates terms with characterization variables, indicating the strength of a certain term for each variant of the characterization variable. In the next sections, we present and discuss the results of our analyses.

4 Student's beliefs about their uses

Graph 1 brings the distribution of the students' responses about whether they use the forms being focused here. The form *a gente* is the most frequently used by them (97%). Only two students stated that they do not say *a gente*. This clearly indicates that *a gente* is part of the linguistic norms of the community, as far as 1PL pronouns go. However, non-standard agreement (*a gente-Vmos*) is negatively evaluated by 83% of the students.

³ Available for download at: www.iramuteq.org.

GRAPH 1 – Students' beliefs about their own linguistic usage



As for *tu* and *tu-VØ*, we found positive beliefs both for the pronoun (83%) and non-standard agreement (68%). Despite the 15-point percentage difference, this indicates an overall positive evaluation for both forms, in contrast to *a gente* vs. *a gente-Vmos*. These data suggest that, even though *a gente-Vmos* and *tu-VØ* are both non-standard agreement forms, they are quite differently evaluated by the students, with *a gente-Vmos* being stigmatized in the community.

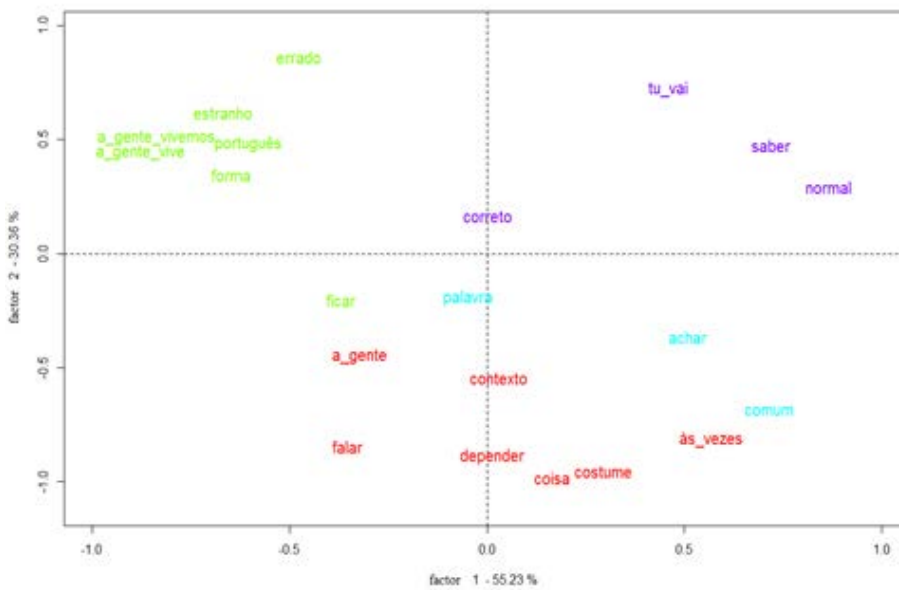
5 Students' evaluations and social meanings

Students' judgments about *a gente*, *tu*, *a gente-Vmos*, and *tu-VØ* were accessed through the question: "what do you think about saying (this form)?" CFA was performed on words with a minimum frequency of 10 occurrences in the *corpus*. Figure 2 crosses the vocabulary used by the students and the linguistic variable with the score calculation by hypergeometric law. We considered the correlation between factor 1 (x-axis) and factor 2 (y-axis) for presenting the results in a factorial plan,⁴ with the following color code: red (*a gente*), light blue (*tu*), green (*a gente-Vmos*) and purple (*tu-VØ*).⁵

⁴ Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5 follow this configuration: representation by correlation – factor $\frac{1}{2}$ and without overlay.

⁵ Through CFA, Iramuteq automatically generates two graphics, the first one with the vocabulary distribution in the factorial plan and the second one with the position in the plan of the selected variable factors for analyses. The interpretation must take into account graph representations.

FIGURE 2 – CFA of the judgement of the linguistic forms



According to Figure 2, saying *a gente*, in the students' perceptions, is a context-based act (*contexto*) and a custom (*costume*), as excerpts (5) and (6) below illustrate. On the other hand, *tu* is a word that students consider as common (*comum*), as in (7). In regard to *a gente-Vmos*, the students used terms wrong (*errado*) (8) and strange (*estranho*) (9), and they also mention the form considered correct (*correto*): *a gente vive* (with standard agreement) (10), (11). Finally, the terms associated with *tu-VØ* were *normal* ("normal") (12) and *correct* ("correto") (13).

- (5) I think that, at least in my case, it depends on the context, depending on what I will say (...). (Informant 22)
- (6) *A gente* is custom, it is a matter of custom, sometimes people say it without realizing. (Informant 14)

- (7) For me, it is common, it is common. The same thing as saying *você* is saying *tu* to me. It is common for me, it is common (Informant 22)
- (8) I think it is wrong to speak like this. (Informant 24)
- (9) I think everyone has the right to speak like they want, but not me, I think it is strange. I am not going to criticize anyone because they speak like this, but not me. (Informant 8)
- (10) *A gente vivemos* is, for example, a sentence. *A gente vivemos* in a capitalist world, this sentence could be used, but then I think that it is not wrong, considering the context, it depends... there are rules in the Portuguese according to which some words are not permitted. (Informant 42)
- (11) This is a little bit more wrong than *a gente*, like...*a gente vivemos* because I think that if we get *a gente*, *a gente* will get in *nós*, not *nós vive*, it is *a gente vive*, it is difficult if you get and put *a gente* next to *nós*. I do not even know how to say, depends on how you want to combine the words, *a gente vivemos* do not seem to agree, *a gente vivemos*... on the other hand, *nós vivemos* in an incredible way, but *nós vive*, *nós vive* it is impossible, no...*nós vive*... no, *nós vivemos* it is ok, *a gente vive*, *a gente vive* it is also ok. I think that *nós* and *a gente* it is wrong, it is wrong. (Informant 31)
- (12) I think it is funny, but normal. (Informant 40)
- (13) I believe it is correct. (Informant 24)

These results indicate that students' perceptions about the four forms are based on the dimensions of standardization and vitality, since the terms they use attribute two types of social values to the linguistic forms: cultural value (common, custom, strange, normal) and normative value (correct, wrong). The pronouns *a gente* and *tu* were evaluated through the cultural prism, while the non-standard agreement forms were judged either from the cultural or the normative points of view, but with distinct values. *A gente-Vmos* was negatively evaluated and associated

with the cultural value *strange* and with the normative value *wrong*. On the other hand, the *tu-Vø* was referred to with the cultural value *normal* and to the normative value *correct*. Similarly to the students' beliefs about their own usage (presented in Graph 1), here we have stigma attached to a *gente-Vmos*.

The distribution in Figure 2 reveals the correlation between factor 1 (first-person plural and second-person singular) on the x-axis and factor 2 (the pronominal forms) on the y-axis. As can be seen, the opposition between the first-person plural and the second-person singular accounts for 55.23% of the variance in the terms used by the subjects to express their judgment, while the y-axis opposes the pronominal forms and the standard agreement, showing a variance of 30.36%. The total variance of vocabulary in Figure 2 is 85.59%.

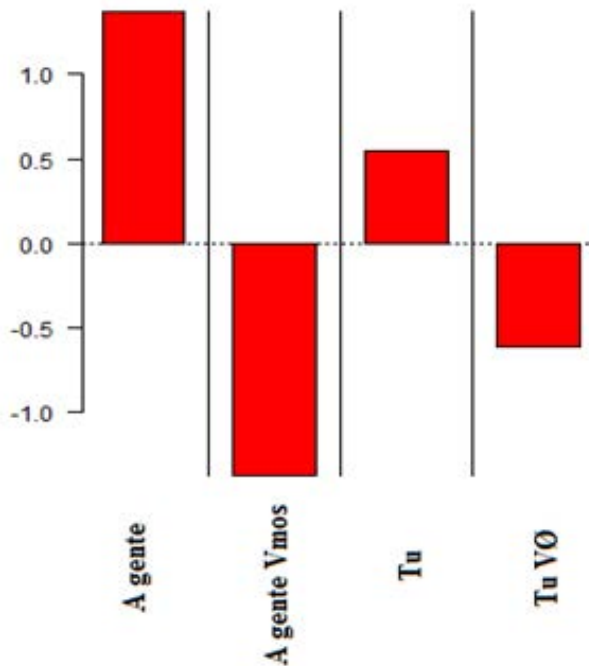
Table 1 summarizes the results of a specificity analysis of the words which were more representative in terms of social meaning of the evaluated linguistic forms. The scores represent the index of correlation between the terms and the linguistic forms. Higher positive values indicate a higher probability of correlation, while the negative values indicate a low probability of the word being associated to the factor.

TABLE 1 – Specificity analysis according to the linguistic form

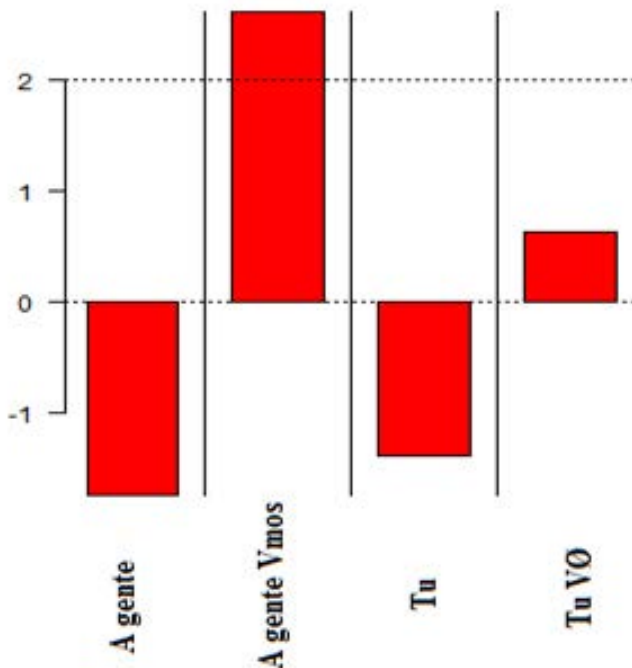
Term	A gente		A gente Vmos		Tu		Tu VØ	
	Score	Freq.	Score	Freq.	Score	Freq.	Score	Freq.
Context	2.642	8	-0.8555	1	-0.9493	0	-0.3635	1
Custom	1.3702	8	-1.3741	1	0.5458	4	-0.6089	1
Commom	0.3982	6	-0.6404	3	0.4172	4	0.2382	3
Wrong	-1.7423	11	2.6077	28	-1.3773	6	0.6246	13
Strange	-2.1691	2	3.6402	16	-0.5543	3	-0.469	3
Normal	-1.5729	15	-9.0555	2	3.5078	26	5.1198	28
Correct	0.4643	11	-0.2489	9	-0.8827	3	0.533	7

The correlations between the words used by the students and the linguistic forms suggest two further evaluations: pronouns vs. agreement forms and neutral/positive vs. negative value. A Specification Analysis of the three most representative terms – *custom*, *wrong* and *strange* – yields the results presented in graphs 2, 3, and 4 respectively.

GRAPH 2 – Specification Analysis of the term *custom*

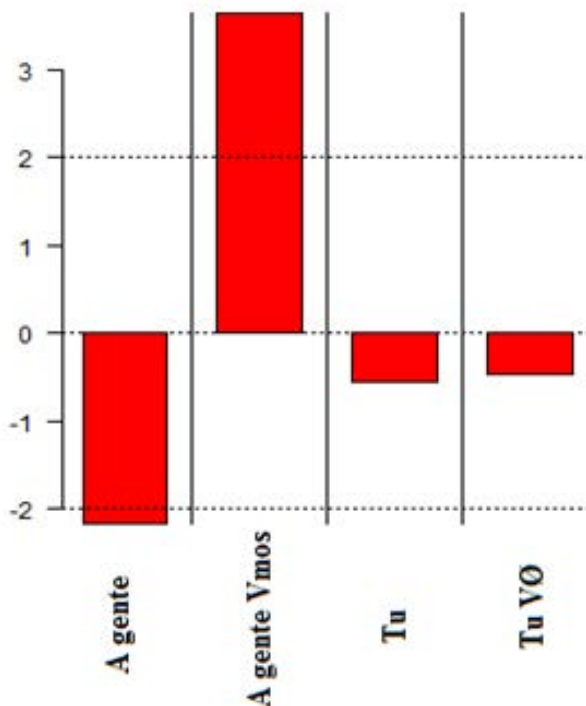


According to Graph 2, the use of the term *custom* distinguishes the pronominal forms from their respective agreement forms, with this term being positively associated with *a gente* and *tu*, but not with non-standard *a gente-Vmos* and *tu-Vø*. The correlation with the first-person plural forms is stronger, both positively from *a gente* and negatively for *a gente-Vmos*. The correlation for *tu* (positive) and *tu-Vø* (negative) is weaker.

GRAPH 3 – Specification Analysis of the term *wrong*

Specification Analysis of the term *wrong* (Graph 3) also distinguishes the pronominal forms from their respective non-standard agreement forms, with positive values for *a gente-Vmos* and *tu-VØ*, and negative values for *a gente* and *tu*. This indicates that while forms of agreement are evaluated with a normative bias, the pronouns are not subject to the same type of social evaluation, confirming the CFA results presented in Figure 2. The strongest correlation with *wrong* is for *a gente-Vmos*.

GRAPH 4 – Specification Analysis of the term *strange*

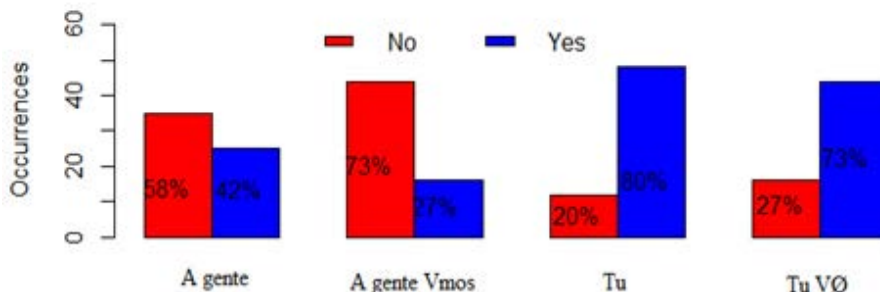


Finally, according to Graph 4, the analysis for *strange* reveals a strong correlation with *a gente-Vmos*, indicating a negative social value, while it is not strongly associated with the other three forms.

6 Region

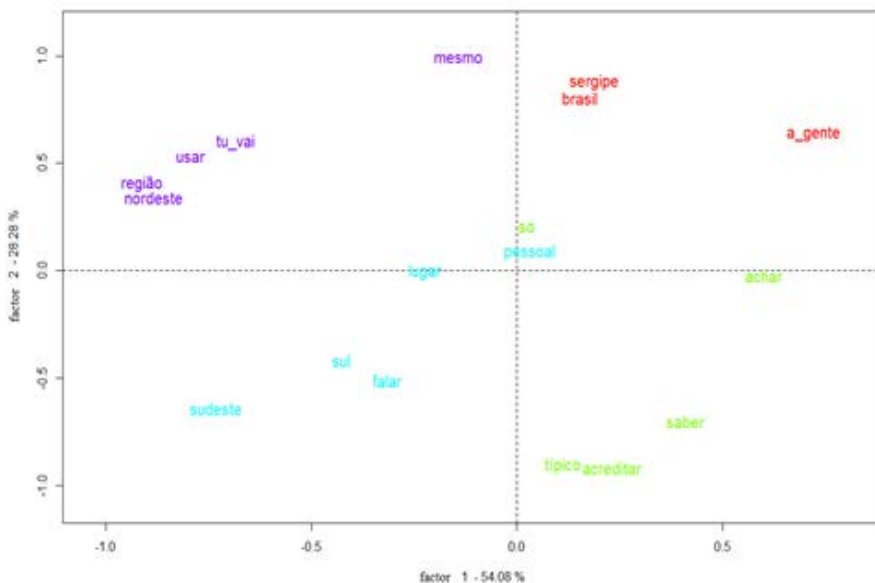
Graph 5 shows that the students do not relate *a gente* and *a gente Vmos* directly to a specific region, with negative responses for regionality of 58% and 73%. Conversely, *tu* and *tu-Vø* are seen as regional.

GRAPH 5 – Students’ responses for region



The answers to the question “Do you think that this way of speaking is typical anywhere in Brazil?” were analyzed through CFA. The results are displayed in figure 3 with *a gente* in red, *tu* in light blue, *a gente-Vmos* in green, and *tu-VØ* in purple.

FIGURE 3 – CFA of responses for region



The students perceive *a gente* as typical of both Sergipe and all of Brazil. This parallels sociolinguistic studies of production which reveal that the use of *a gente* in spoken BP is very frequent all over the country (VIANNA; LOPES, 2015). In contrast, *tu* was associated by the students with Southern and Southeastern Brazil. Sociolinguistic research does indicate high rates of *tu* in southern Brazil (cf. LOREGIAN-PENKAL, 2004), but not in the southeast (cf. CALMON, 2010). They did not associate *a gente- Vmos* with a specific region, but placed *tu-VØ* in Northeastern Brazil.

As for the distribution of terms in the factorial plan, the factor 1 (x-axis) opposes the second-person singular (left plan) and the first-person plural (right plan), accounting for 54.8% of the variance of terms used by the students to characterize the linguistic forms, with regard to region. Factor 2 is responsible for 28.28% of the variance of the answers; however, it does not indicate that the pronominal forms are opposed to the non-standard agreements, differently from the CFA presented earlier, in figure 2. In addition, here the distribution of terms in the y-axis occurs from the perspective of belonging, i.e., belonging to Brazil, Northeastern Brazil, and Sergipe.

Table 2 summarizes the specificity analysis of regions identified by the students.

TABLE 2 – Specificity analysis according to the linguistic form

Term	A gente		A gente Vmos		Tu		Tu VØ	
	Score	Freq.	Score	Freq.	Score	Freq.	Score	Freq.
Brazil	0.5951	5	-0.5895	1	-0.2469	4	0.2658	4
Sergipe	1.1148	6	-1.1157	0	-0.3958	3	0.3221	4
Northeast	-0.8366	8	-0.3888	7	-0.3623	13	1.4026	18
South	-2.4274	1	-0.9476	2	2.8349	16	0.3559	8
Southeast	-1.3826	0	0.2154	2	0.6563	5	0.4733	4

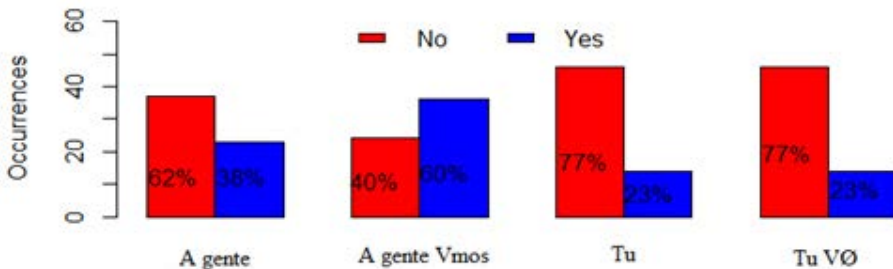
The terms students used, which are highlighted in the factorial plan, attribute the *tu* and *tu-VØ* to specific regions of the country, while

a gente was associated both to Brazil and to Sergipe, the state where the participants are from. Although *a gente-Vmos* was not associated with any specific region in the factorial plan, the specificity analysis evidences a correlation with the Southeast.

7 Education

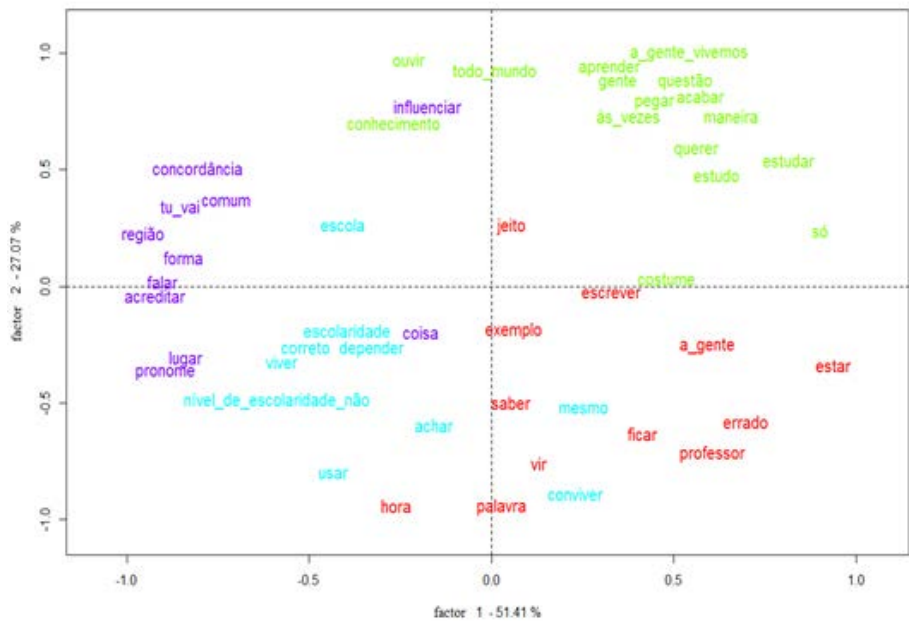
Sociolinguistic studies have demonstrated that, depending on the linguistic phenomenon, education may condition the use of specific variants, thus promoting or preventing a specific linguistic change (VOTRE, 2008). Here, we analyze the students' responses for: "Do you think that the use of (this form) has anything to do with one's level of education?".

GRAPH 6 – Students' responses about the relationship between the linguistic forms and education



Graph 6 reveals that, among the four forms, *a gente-Vmos* was the only one associated with education by the students. Figure 4 shows the CFA results for the responses given by the students about the relationship between the linguistic form and education.

FIGURE 4 – CFA of responses for education



The correlation between factors 1 and 2 explains 78.48% of the variance of terms used by the students in their answers. Factor 1 (x-axis) opposes 2SG (left plan) to 1PL (right plan). This factor accounts for 51.41% of the variance. Factor 2 (y-axis), which accounts for 27.07% of the variance, opposes non-standard agreement (superior plan) to the pronominal forms (inferior plan). The proximity between the terms in the factorial plan evidences a representation of the connections among the words in the *corpus*. The terms agreement (*concordância*), *tu vai*, and common (*comum*) are close to one another, suggesting that *tu Vø* is common in participants' perception. Similarly, the terms region (*região*), form (*forma*), speak (*falar*), and believe (*acreditar*) are correlated in the *corpus*, which indicates that students consider that *tu-Vø* is a way of speaking linked to the regional factor.

Figure 4 shows that *a gente* is correlated to the terms like way (*jeito*) and hour (*hora* – representing the moment in which one speaks). Words related to formal education, like knowledge (*conhecimento*), wrong (*errado*), write (*escrever*), and teacher (*professor*) were also associated to this pronominal form. These correlations reveal that students relate *a gente* to the formal education as well as to demands and needs of the communicative event. The form *tu* (in light blue) was associated with terms such as correct (*correto*), life with (*conviver*), live (*viver*), and with “to think it has nothing to do with education” (*achar que não tem a ver com a escolaridade*).

The form *a gente-Vmos* (in green) was related to terms like knowledge (*conhecimento*), study (*estudo*), learn (*aprender*) (all linked to the role of education), and to hear (*ouvir*) and a custom (*costume*). For *tu-Vø* (in purple), the terms most frequently used were: region (*região*), place (*lugar*), agreement (*concordância*), common (*comum*) and “to believe it is a form of speaking” (*acreditar que é uma forma de falar*). These terms evidence the lack of relation between *tu-Vø* and education.

Except for the terms associated to *tu-Vø*, which associate that form with region, the other terms in the factorial plan recall two semantic fields: the influence of linguistic contact and social linguistic contexts (custom, listening, life, utterance situation) and school terminologies (writing, correct, wrong, learning, professor). Table 3 presents the words with the strongest association with each linguistic form, vis-à-vis the students’ perceptions in terms of the influence of education in the use of the variants.

TABLE 3 – Specificity analysis according to the linguistic form

Term	A gente		A gente Vmos		Tu		Tu VØ	
	Score	Freq.	Score	Freq.	Score	Freq.	Score	Freq.
Wrong	1.3072	17	-0.2902	10	-0.3116	6	-1.1604	4
Writing	0.9975	6	-0.2087	3	-0.9535	0	-0.2525	2
Professor	0.5975	5	-0.2087	3	0.4983	3	-1.176	0
Non-schooling level	-1.3222	1	-1.8893	0	2.4328	7	0.882	5
Depend	-1.7548	4	-0.4552	7	2.4314	12	0.3114	7
Level of Education	-0.6786	2	-0.2643	3	0.8088	4	0.2981	3
Study	0.458	15	0.9672	16	-0.693	5	-0.7998	6
Knowledge	-2.1581	2	0.9538	10	0.3551	5	0.5963	7
Listening	-1.1115	4	0.9538	10	-0.7852	2	0.8872	8
Region	-1.0483	1	-0.8662	1	0.2096	2	2.4973	7
Common	-0.5311	5	-0.6092	4	-0.6189	2	2.1375	10
Agreement	-0.9152	1	-0.3687	2	-0.3592	1	2.0175	6

In general, the results show that *a gente* was not associated, by most university students, to education – although they do talk about it in terms of writing, as in (14). Note that, in this example, the informant is concerned with subject-verb agreement, not focusing the pronominal form itself. This is the reason why, sometimes, the term wrong (*errado*) was mentioned by the speakers in their answers about education. These results parallel those obtained from the yes-no question about whether education interferes with pronoun choice (Graph 6), as well as with results of production studies (FRANCESCHINI, 2011; MENDONÇA, 2012; FOEGER, 2014; SCHERRE; NARO, 2014). As for *tu* and *tu-VØ*, they were not linked to the speaker level of education: the first was commented on with “it depends on custom” (“depende do costume”) as in (15); the second was associated to regionality (16).

- (14) Because it is not wrong to say *a gente*. I do not think it is wrong to say *a gente*. Now, writing *a gente...* not *a gente vai*, you have to contextualize the sentence to consider it correct because it is not the word that is wrong... yes, also because if you write *agente* (“agent”), what kind of *agente* (“agent”) it is? It is a person that provides a service. But if it is *a gente*, you have to contextualize with the sentence to make sense also because *nós vai* is it correct? *Nós* is beautiful, it is a pronoun to more than one person, but not *nós vai*, it is wrong, so *nós vamos...* then it is correct. And *a gente* you can also combine in the sentence to make sense. (Informant 02)
- (15) No, I think it is going to depend on the custom where the person lives and people around her. (Informant 52)
- (16) Also no, because it will depend on the region that the person lives. (Informant 36)

Students’ perceptions of *a gente-Vmos* follow two directions: they reaffirm the importance of education (17) and of interaction (18).

- (17) Because, like, to us, the correct is to say *a gente vive*, I think that most people say *a gente vive*, I think that there is a minority that says *a gente vivemos*, so I think there is a similarity when you say *a gente vivemos*, I believe that when I hear *a gente vivemos* it is wrong because I hear *a gente vive* a lot. (Informant 29)
- (18) I do not think so, depends on the reality of the place, what is common to that region is what the population, most people will learn. Because we learn at school how to speak correctly, but we hear so much on streets, at work, *a gente vai*, the mind starts to get used to say the wrong expression. (Informant 03)

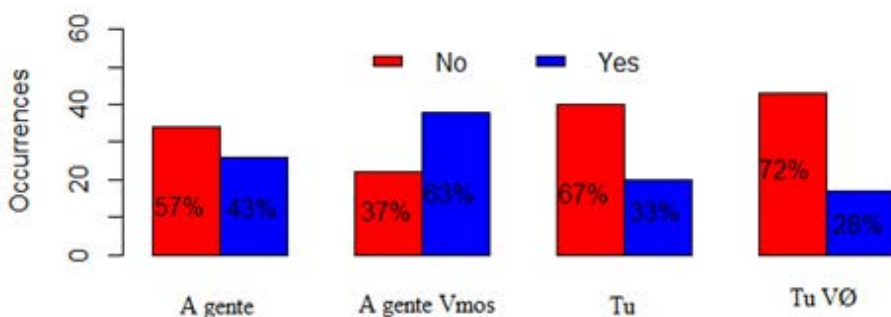
These results about *a gente-Vmos* and education are in line with the studies about subject-verb agreement that demonstrate how important the role of schooling is in these processes of variation and change (cf. FREITAG, 2016). It is worth to highlight that, for *tu* and *tu-Vø*, most

students did not mention education, contrarily to sociolinguistic studies that have been advocating for the significance of this factor (LOREGIAN-PENKAL, 1996; LOREGIAN-PENKAL, 2004; MODESTO, 2006; FRANCESCHINI, 2011).

8 Prejudice

There are linguistic phenomena that are subject to social stigma, often resulting in linguistic prejudice and social discrimination (BAGNO, 2009). Analyzing this issue is the goal of our question: “Do you think that people who say (this form) are subject to any prejudice? Why?”

GRAPH 7 – Students’ responses for prejudice



Graph 7 shows that, according to the students, only people who say *a gente-Vmos* are subject to prejudice (63% answered yes). Note that this is not the case for the pronoun *a gente* (43% yes). Here too, we display the CFA results for words used to explain the perception about prejudice associated to the four forms.

FIGURE 5 – The CFA of the perception of the factor prejudice

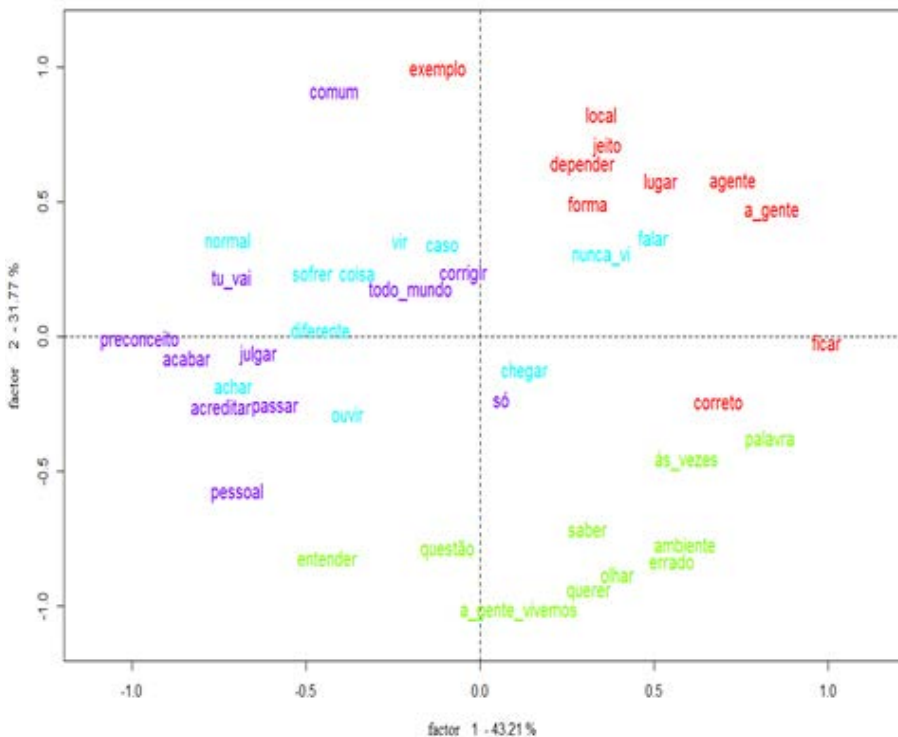


Figure 5 shows that the students described *a gente* with the words like way (*jeito*), local (*local*), place (*lugar*), and correct (*correto*), which are not linked to notions of prejudice. Similarly, when talking about *tu*, the expressions “I have never heard” (*nunca vi falar*), normal (*normal*) indicate that the students are not aware of prejudice in relation to that pronoun.

As for *a gente-Vmos*, the students use the terms wrong (*errado*), understand (*entender*), know (*saber*), situation (*ambiente*), which can be related to prejudice. For *tu-Vø*, they used expressions like common (*comum*), “everybody corrects it” (*todo mundo corrige*), to judge (*julgar*), and to believe (*acreditar*). Even though these are more related to the

emergence of prejudice, graph 7 shows that the majority of students believe that people who speak *tu-Vø* are not subject to prejudice.

Here, Factor 1 (x-axis) is based on the opposition between 2SG and 1PL, and accounts for 43.21% of the variance in the terms employed by the students. Factor 2 did not establish a clear opposition among *tu* and *tu-Vø*, since the terms attributed to them are considerably close and to the center of the factorial plan. However, we have a clear opposition between *a gente-Vmos* and the other forms: the terms associated with *a gente*, *tu* and *tu-Vø* are close to one another and far from those that describe *a gente-Vmos*.

Table 4 shows a specificity analysis of the most frequent terms used by the students in their responses about prejudice.

TABLE 4 – Specificity analysis according to the linguistic form

Term	A gente		A gente Vmos		Tu		Tu VØ	
	Score	Freq.	Score	Freq.	Score	Freq.	Score	Freq.
Agent	6.1476	11	-1.4456	0	-1.2362	0	-1.2783	0
Depend	1.1023	15	-0.728	7	-0.6898	6	0.4044	10
Local	1.0642	6	-0.8562	1	-0.3336	2	0.2529	3
Normal	-0.7291	4	-0.6108	4	0.8918	8	0.5542	7
Different	-0.6002	2	-0.2595	3	0.8205	5	-0.1949	3
Have never seen	0.2906	4	-0.2595	3	0.4696	4	-0.4176	2
Wrong	0.4126	17	2.8024	25	-1.0974	8	-1.9204	6
Understand	-1.5453	1	1.3107	8	-0.6567	2	0.7298	6
Know	0.313	17	1.2076	21	-1.2663	8	-0.3254	13
Jugde	-0.5139	3	-0.2265	4	-0.5871	2	1.2439	7
Prejudice	-1.5512	22	-0.4163	27	0.6651	29	1.1848	33
Common	0.3004	6	-1.7266	1	0.5353	6	0.7832	7

Prejudice was related to *a gente*, but in reference to writing it as one word: *agente* ‘agent’, as in (19). *A gente-Vmos* was described as *errado* ‘wrong’ and linked with linguistic prejudice (20). The terms most frequently used to talk about *tu* were *normal* ‘normal’ (21) and *diferente* ‘different’ (22). Finally, *tu-Vø* was related to *julgar* ‘judge’, as in (23).

- (19) I think that people who write *agente* suffer [prejudice] because they do not know how to write, they write everything together, *agente*, and *agente* is a person from CIA, a guy from the police, anyway. (Informant 56)
- (20) If you are in a place where people think it is wrong, you will suffer prejudice and people will give you the look, but if you are among people who do not mind, I think nothing wrong will happen, like, let’s say with prejudice. (Informant 07)
- (21) No, because I think that something like that is so normal... I have never seen anyone complain that they suffered prejudice because he said *tu*. (Informant 17)
- (22) Someone suffers, suffers, suffers, because they suffer prejudice because people will give them the look, like, “look that stupid person”, I do not know. People have prejudice to what is different, with people who speak differently. (Informant 37)
- (23) They suffer because people think that it is wrong. I think that the language, I mean, the language has nothing to do with the writing or the grammar. People judge a lot because if...if people spoke according to grammar, they would not be able to speak, it is hard, everybody will judge anyway. (Informant 54)

The specificity analysis shows that all four forms can actually be subject to prejudice, a *gente-Vmos* is the most frequently talked about in terms of prejudice by the students – which parallels what we have seen with Graph 7 and Figure 4.

9 Final Remarks

The aim of this study was to analyze university students' beliefs about the pronouns *a gente* and *tu*, as well as about non-standard agreement with these forms. The students are from the Federal University of Sergipe (Campus Professor Alberto Carvalho, Itabaiana-SE), and the analyses were done with the Iramuteq software. The methodological contribution to perception studies is in the relationship between the vocabulary used by the students to express their beliefs and the linguistic variants evaluated. Describing such relationship in statistical terms was enabled by Iramuteq, which also permitted Correspondence Factorial Analysis: comparisons between beliefs related to each linguistic variant, which provides objectivity and reliability (in addition to replicability).

We designed an attitude questionnaire composed of five evaluation parameters: beliefs about usage, metalinguistic judgment, region, education, and prejudice. The students' beliefs about their own linguistic behavior indicate a high frequency of acceptance of *a gente* and *tu*, suggesting that these variants are part of the linguistic norms of the community. In addition, students' beliefs about *a gente* had a higher percentage of positive answers in comparison to those regarding *tu*, confirming our hypothesis.

Although *A gente-Vmos* and *tu-VØ* are both non-standard forms of subject-verb agreement, they were given different social values by the students. The first is frequently negatively evaluated, while the second was described rather positively, showing that only *a gente-Vmos* is stigmatized in the community.

Concerning the metalinguistic judgment of the four forms, the students' perceptions were based on the dimensions of standardization and vitality. The pronouns *a gente* and *tu* were both evaluated through the cultural prism, while the non-standard agreement forms were differently judged. *A gente Vmos* was associated with the cultural value *strange* and with the normative value *wrong*. *Tu-VØ* was described as *normal* and *correct*. These results for metalinguistic judgments confirm our initial hypothesis.

As for perceptions of region, *tu* and *tu-VØ* were associated to specific regions of the country. *A gente* was generally associated with Brazil and with the participants' home state of Sergipe. On the other hand, *a gente-Vmos* was not linked to any particular region. These results

confirm our hypothesis only partially, since we expected that students would associate both *a gente-Vmos* and *tu-Vø* with specific regions of the country.

The results also indicate that the majority of students did not correlate the use of *a gente* to (lack of) education, differently from *a gente-Vmos*. Moreover, students also consider that *custom* is as relevant as education for the use of *a gente-Vmos*. Differently, the students did not associate *tu* and *tu-Vø* to education. This result does not correspond to earlier sociolinguistic studies, which have evidenced the influence of education on the use of these forms. Therefore, our hypothesis for *tu-Vø* was not confirmed. Finally, the students generally linked all four forms to prejudice – but particularly *a gente-Vmos*.

Overall, the students' beliefs are based on three elements of the model of attitude as a social process: their own social characteristics, the social-structural dimensions of standardization and vitality, and the established social norms of the community. When expressing their beliefs about *a gente*, *tu*, *a gente-Vmos* and *tu-Vø*, they express both beliefs formed throughout their years of education and normative practices of the community (such as frequency of use of the forms, the social profile associated with a certain use, and the context in which the uses are acceptable or negatively evaluated). This study provides, then, a methodological contribution as ways of measuring beliefs about grammatical structures and of considering the social process involved in the emergence of such beliefs.

Authors' contribution

This paper is part of the authors' ongoing doctorate research advised by Professor Raquel Meister Ko. Freitag. The two authors selected and discussed the theoretical framework, designed the methodology, and gathered and transcribed the data used in the research. The theoretical section on Linguistic Attitudes was written by the first author. The other sections were jointly written by both authors.

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