

HISTORY OF PAULISTA BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE

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Pallière, Arnaud Julien. Panorama of the City of São Paulo, 1821. Oil painting. 36.5 x 96.8 cm. 52 x 113,3 x 7 cm [frame]. Collection of Banco Itaú S.A. (São Paulo, SP)

The History of Paulista Brazilian Portuguese project aims to recover the linguistic history of the Paulista society. The first Portuguese settlers came to São Vicente in 1532, founding the Capitania of São Paulo and São Vicente (now São Paulo State). São Vicente is the oldest town in the country and was the first town to be lusitanized. As part of a larger project, the Project for the History of Brazilian Portuguese, which was proposed at USP in the late 1990s, this project focuses on four themes: (i) social history, (ii) grammatical change, (iii) text and discourse diachrony, and (iv) the development of a diachronic corpus. Social history addresses the social factors that framed the implementation of the Portuguese language in São Paulo. From the 16th to the 18th centuries, Portuguese settlers, Indians and African slaves developed complex linguistic contacts in the “capitania”. From the 19th to the 20th centuries, European and Asian immigrants moved to São Paulo in search of agricultural and industrial jobs. Since 1950, Brazilians from other states, mainly from the Northeast, came to São Paulo for the same reasons.

Grammatical change involves the study of the transformations of the Portuguese language after its arrival in this part of America. Phonological, morphological and syntactic changes are the main concerns of the researchers, who take into account formal and functional theories about language change. Text and discourse diachrony constitutes a new set of questions in the field of Historical Linguistics; for example, what transformations have text processes undergone in São Paulo? To provide empirical evidence to this research, a diachronic corpus has been organized that includes several discourse traditions and genres, such as personal and administrative letters, newspaper ads and readers’ letters, historical memoirs, travel journals, testaments and inventories. The collected materials span the 18th to the 20th centuries. All of these materials underwent philological editing prior to their use. To become familiar with this agenda, ten research groups have been established with more than 70 researchers recruited from three public universities in the State of São Paulo: the University of São Paulo (USP), the State University of Campinas (Unicamp) and São Paulo State University (Unesp).

SUMMARY OF RESULTS TO DATE AND PERSPECTIVES

From 2007 to 2008, all workgroups produced the MA and PhD dissertations, papers and book chapters indicated below. Papers on social history showed that until the 18th century, the cultivated Paulistas adopted the European pattern of writing, reducing the use of the popular dialect, better known as “caipira”. The Brazilian Portuguese standard was established in the second half of the 19th century, coinciding with the multilingualism of the Paulista society, due to external and internal immigrations. The substandard Paulista dialect was involved in the multilingualism issue as well. Extensive studies on grammaticalization have focused on serial verbs, the representation of cognitive categories, and the birth of textual connectors, among other themes. Rules on agreement suggest the possible maintenance of late medieval rules that were brought to Brazil by people born in the second half of the 15th century. Studies on the diachrony of texts have revealed the importance of epilingualism among other interactional processes of text building, such as paraphrases, parenthesis, correction and repetition. Textual connectors show fluctuation processes that go back and forth to create textual unities. Some contributions to the theory of language change are still being formulated.

MAIN PUBLICATIONS

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