

Portuguese Teachers' Training in Brazil in Monolingual Urban and Rural Areas: A Historical and Geographical Approach

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Abstract

This text draws a picture of the Brazilian society from both a historical and geographical point of view. Brazil is the 5th largest country in the world and from the 16th Century onwards was inhabited by the Portuguese and the Africans, which joined the aboriginal Indians whose population is estimated in less than one million. The demographic facts concerning our country have to account for the geographic mobility of the population, domestic and external immigration, as well as the urbanization and peculiar historical events that explain Brazil's monarchy and the Independence in 1882. This paper also hinges at income distribution, social networks, functional literacy, demographic density and, finally, at the standardization processes of Brazilian Portuguese.

Keywords: Historical information on the Brazilian society; Geographic and social mobility; Standardization processes of Brazilian Portuguese.

Introduction

Brazil is the fifth largest country in km² and the sixth largest population in the world: 214 million. It is also inhabited by a multi-ethnic population, composed of the European colonizers – the Portuguese – and many immigrants, especially from Italy, Spain and Germany, as well as Asians from Japan and Korea. The Africans that were brought in as slaves, from the 16th century until 1888, were supposedly around four million people, and some authors claim that this was the largest intercontinental transfer of people in the history. But there are doubts about their exact number. In the 16th century the aboriginal population was distributed around many ethnic groups: 2 million living on the coast and 1 million living the hinterland. According to the 2010 IBGE¹ Census, there are around 305 ethnic aboriginal groups in Brazil, encompassing 817.663 Indians (BORTONI-RICARDO, 2021). But indeed, there are not reliable statistics concerning the present indigenous population, and different sources bring different estimates. Still the official numbers appoint to less than 1 million. Most of the European and Asian immigrants were settled in the Southern areas of the country where the climate is not very hot.

We should consider also that the Brazilian population is marked by an intense geographic mobility, emphasizing, in particular, the domestic immigration from the Northeastern to the Southern, Southeastern and central areas. The heaviest movements of internal migration increase were witnessed after the second decade of the 20th Century and can be explained by poverty and lack of job opportunities in the immigrants' native states as well as by the great progress of State of São Paulo and neighbors, due to the development of industry and modern agriculture. The following table depicts the transition from rural to urban population from the 19th Century onwards.

¹ Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística.

Table 1 – Urban population in Brazil

Year	Total population	Urban population
1890	14.333.915	6,8%
1920	30.635.605	10,7%
1940	41.236.315	31,29%
1950	51.944.397	36,16%
1980	120.000.000	67,60%
1991	157.000.000	78,35%
2000	168.370.893	81,37%
2015	204.450.649	84,72%

Source: IBGE, Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios (PNAD) 2000/2015.

In spite of the large territory and the multiple sources of immigration, there are not relevant cultural differences among the regions and, most importantly, Brazil has maintained Portuguese as the only official language throughout the country, which is taught in every school².

Many researchers consider the regime of constitutional monarchy, under the Portuguese Emperors, Dom Pedro I and his son Dom Pedro II, from 1808³ until 1889, a factor of maintenance of the country's large territory and the predominance of the Portuguese Language, whereas the Hispanic vice-reigns in Latin-American were divided in many Spanish speaking nations.

Important historical facts in the 19th Century anticipated Brazil's Independence and shed light on it as they contributed to the permanence of the Portuguese Prince, Pedro I, in Brazil after the return of his father Dom João VI's Court to Portugal (Colombo, 2022). I shall mention some of them as follows. On August 24, 1820, there was a Liberal Revolution in the Northern Portuguese city of the Porto and demanded the Court's return to Portugal. Few days afterwards the movement reached Lisbon. In January 1821 a new Constitution is written and Parliamentarism adopted as a system of government. In the same year, Dom João VI goes back to Portugal leaving in Brazil his son Dom Pedro (I) as a Regent Prince. But the Prince was also forced to go back to Portugal in October of the same year. The meanwhile the growing Brazilian elite recognized that it was important to keep the prince living in Brazil and on January 9, 1822, collected a letter with 8.000 signatures requesting that he remained in Brazil. According to the historical narrative, Dom Pedro receives the letter and declares that he will stay. The episode is known as "Dia do Fico" (I stay day) (Colombo, 2022). These peculiar historical facts were relevant to the preservation of the large territory and the official language in Brazil and can help us understand the birth of Brazil as an independent country.

The main linguistic differences in the Brazilian society are due to the inequalities of income, and the consequent degree of education, as well as to the residence of the population, first on the coast and then also in the hinterland. In societies with high degree of illiteracy and unequal income distribution as it is the case of Brazil, the identification of social classes can be blurred and therefore it is convenient to approach the study of the Brazilian society with the methodology of social networks, as a means for assessing the degree of assimilation to the standard/urban language and culture by the population at large (cf. Bortoni-Ricardo, 1985).

The social British anthropologist Michael Banton (1973) set a model that helps understand group distinctiveness in pre-industrial societies, which can be useful to describe the colonization decades in Brazil.

Where rural-urban continuity is high the migrant will maintain something of the same outlook, taking his relatives and former neighbors as a positive reference group. But the general effect of the migration is to remove individuals from the controls exerted by their old peer groups and to give them new scope for choice. Where rural-urban continuity is low, a worker is more likely to live entirely within the city, both physically and psychologically. He was continually to deal with strangers, and their standards have in many cases to be taken models. He cannot rely upon peer group sanctions but must develop interpersonal controls on a new basis (Banton, 1973: 59-60).

² "Aside from Portuguese, the country has also numerous minority languages, including indigenous languages, such as Nheengatu (a descendant of Tupi), and languages of more recent European and Asian immigrants, such as Italian, German and Japanese. In some municipalities, those minor languages have official status: Nheengatu, for example, is an official language in São Gabriel da Cachoeira, while a number of German dialects are official in nine southern municipalities" (Wikipedia, 2022).

³ In 1808 Napoleon's troupes invaded Portugal and forced the Court to be moved to Brazil.

The following table shows the distinction between insulated and integrated Brazilian social networks and the consequences of such dichotomy to the access of the prestigious ways of speaking and living.

Table 2 – Types of social networks and rural-urban transition

Types of networks	Analytical criteria			Characteristics of verbal repertoire
	Norm reinforcement	Density of role-relationships	Group membership	
Insulated networks	Group sanction/consensus: resistance to change	Low density of role-relationships: interaction within a limited number of people	Original peer group as a reference group	Dialect focusing Limited access to the prestigious code
Integrated networks	Larger exposure to out-group influences	Higher density of role-relationships: interaction with different background in many social contexts	Identification with more prestigious groups	Dialect diffuseness More flexibility concerning control of prestige code and styles Hypercorrections

Source: Bortoni-Ricardo, 1985 p. 120.

I shall start with the distinction between two types of networks: the insulated and the integrated ones. The first category favors group consensus and the consequent resistance to change. The integrated networks, on the other hand, are marked by the identification with more prestigious groups. As far as linguistic behavior is concerned, the members of insulated networks tend to focusing their dialects and to having little access to prestigious forms of talks. Dialect diffuseness is synonym with more verbal flexibility and control of the prestigious behavior that can lead to hypercorrections as an effort to approach such behavior.

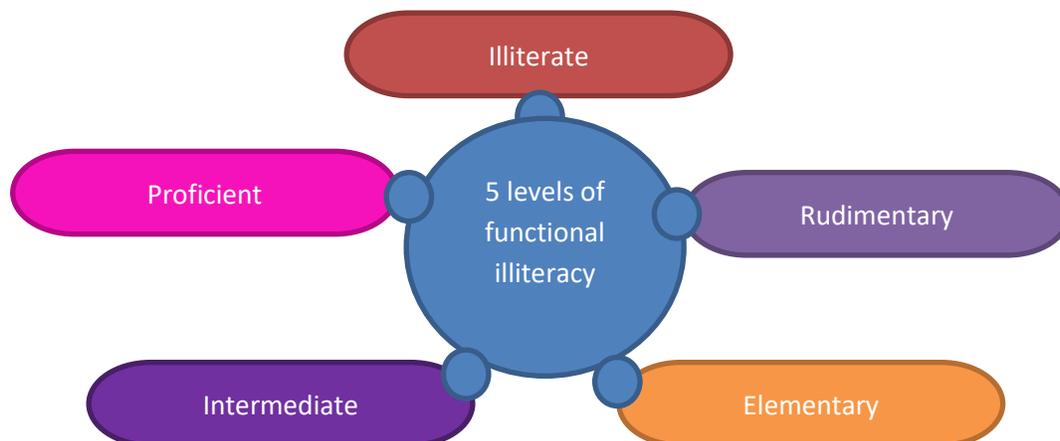
This shortly described paradigm can be useful in the description of the linguistic ecology of the Portuguese speaking areas in Brazil and therefore can help the teachers' training programs, aiming at the first years of schooling, at high school and at college. For the sake of this description, I will consider the following categories of formal education in the Brazilian population, according to the Institute Paulo Montenegro.

1. First cycle of the fundamental education or children's education (up to four years of schooling)
2. Five years of schooling
3. Eight years of schooling
4. Complete high school
5. College education

This Institute is the NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) responsible for rating of literacy levels in Brazil. It provides the INAF (Index of Functional Literacy)⁴ and describes the five levels of illiteracy as in the Figure 1:

⁴ A functionally literate reader is able to read well enough to operate in society, encompassing the level of literacy that enables a person to be trained in technical or trade courses. Attaining the minimal reading age is critical for a person to adequately function in society (Kip McGrath Education Centres, 2022).

Figure 1 – Functional illiteracy



Source: Inaf, 2022.

1. An illiterate person cannot perform simple tasks of word and sentence reading, but very often can read familiar numbers, such as telephone numbers and prices.
2. At the rudimentary level of literacy, a person can read very simple texts, as a calendar and write familiar numbers, in particular monetary bills and coins. He can solve simple mathematical operations, comparing quantities and measurement units and recognizes punctuation marks.
3. At the elementary level, a reader is capable of performing simple inferences and exhibits a certain degree of planning and control, as regards the cost of installments, for example, without the income tax, in the everyday context. He can also recognize the traffic signs.
4. At the intermediate level, a reader can locate information in simple journalistic texts and solve quantitative operations, like percentages and proportions, as well as estimate simple income taxes, and geometrical measurements, as the area and the perimeter of a space. He can compare different opinions with the common sense and identify the lexical figures of speech and the punctuation marks.
5. A proficient reader can work with texts of higher complexity as a message, a description or an argument, and analyze the opinion or style of the text author. He can read tables and graphics which involve two or more variables, identifying emphasis and tendencies. Finally, the proficient reader can solve problems situations in different tasks of planning, control and inferencing.

The information capturing in the process of reading requires from the reader the capacity of dealing with two or more elements, comparing and ordering them (larger/smaller, more/less, before/after) and creating logical relations such as cause and effect, synonyms, part and whole, source, opinion, etc. In order to read and to write a person needs to integrate old and new information as the text progresses. Very often, this involves the association between numbers, graphs, maps, diagrams, etc (Inaf, 2022).

A dialectological map of the Brazilian states and regions can be helpful for a better understanding of the distribution of literacy resources in the country. The Northern area encompasses the Amazonian states which are divided in very large counties. The main cities are the capital of the State of the Amazon, Manaus, with an estimated population of 2,255,903 and the capital of the State of Pará, Belém, with 1,506,420 people. The demographic density of the Northern region is of 4,5 inhabitants/km² only.

In the Northeastern region of Brazil, on the other hand, the demographic density raises to 34 inhabitants/km².

In the center of the country, the demographic density is 9,7 inhabitants/km². The most populated region is the Southern one, where the largest Brazilian cities are located (87 inhabitants/km²).

I am enclosing these maps because there is a clear correlation between the demographic densities of the Brazilian regions and the development of urbanization and literacy.

The first map with the dialect regions was designed by Antenor Nascentes (1953) with the support of Serafim da Silva Neto (1950). It is useful to compare it with the present map with all the state capitals to acknowledge the

urbanization processes in the last seven decades and the consequent development of the language standardization in the urbanized areas.

Figure 2 – Dialectological map⁵



Source: BARBADINHO NETO (2003, p. 700).

Figure 3 – Brazilian states and capitals in 2022.



Source: The Rio Times, 2021.

In the history of speech communities, a language (or a variety of a language), – in general the most used one – can be raised to the level of a standard variety, used in both oral and written modes. This process of standardization includes the development of school grammars, of dictionaries and of orthographic vocabularies, among other procedures. The standard variety then becomes a subject matter of language teaching in schools and in the development of literature (Bortoni-Ricardo, 2021).

⁵ Amazon, Northeastern, Territory not identified, Bahian, Southern, Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro.

In the 16th Century, when the Brazilian colonization started, the Portuguese language had already begun its process of standardization. Luis de Camões wrote his “Os Lusíadas” using this variety in 1572, and Fernão de Oliveira developed the first “Grammatica da Lingoagem Portuguesa” in 1536 (Bortoni-Ricardo, 2021).

A standard variety (or language in bilingual or multilingual areas) can be associated with the social ecology of the language, e.g., official contexts, that demand more formality, impose the use of the standard language, whereas private or domestic contexts are related to the informal variety of the language (Bortoni-Ricardo, 2021).

In our country, even though the standard variety is context-related, not every social group has access to it. It is used only by those groups that can afford to reach higher levels of schooling, such as a high school and college. Therefore, the use of the standard variety in Brazil has to be analyzed as both context and class-related.

In order to make this distinction clearer, I make a further distinction between the real standard, used by speakers to meet the context demands, and the referential standard, described in the grammars. It is also useful to consider that most processes of language standardization started in the Middle Ages in European countries, and were implemented by socioeconomic and historic variables, that explain their horizontal variation (in the geographic area) as well as their vertical variation (in social classes and contexts). Therefore we should consider here the foundation of the first contemporary capitals in Brazil to shed light on the standardization of Brazilian Portuguese:

Pernambuco – Recife (1537)

Bahia – Salvador (1549)

Espírito Santo – Vitória (1551)

São Paulo – São Paulo (1554)

Rio de Janeiro – Rio de Janeiro (1565)

Paraíba – João Pessoa (1585)

Rio Grande do Norte – Natal (1599)

Maranhão – São Luís (1612)

Pará – Belém (1616)

Paraná – Curitiba (1661)

Amazonas – Manaus (1669)

Santa Catarina – Florianópolis (1673)

Mato Grosso – Cuiabá (1719)

Ceará – Fortaleza (1726)

Amapá – Macapá (1758)

Rio Grande do Sul – Porto Alegre (1772)

Alagoas – Maceió (1815)

Piauí – Teresina (1852)

Sergipe – Aracaju (1855)

Acre – Rio Branco (1882)

Roraima – Boa Vista (1890)

Minas Gerais – Belo Horizonte (1897)

Mato Grosso do Sul – Campo Grande (1899)

Rondônia – Porto Velho (1907)

Goiás – Goiânia (1933)

Distrito Federal – Brasília (1960)

Tocantins – Palmas (1989)

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