

REFLECTIONS ON DATA COLLECTION AND INTERACTION IN SOCIO-DIALECTAL RESEARCH: GUIDELINES FOR FIELD RESEARCHERS

REFLEXÕES SOBRE A COLETA DE DADOS E INTERAÇÃO EM PESQUISAS SOCIODIALETAIS: DIRETRIZES PARA PESQUISADORES DE CAMPO

RÉFLEXIONS SUR LA COLLECTE DE DONNÉES ET L'INTERACTION DANS LES RECHERCHES SOCIODIALECTALES: LIGNES DIRECTRICES POUR LES CHERCHEURS SUR LE TERRAIN

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Abstract: There are many discussions revolving around issues concerning the primary stage of work for dialectologists and Sociolinguists: on-site data collection and face-to-face interaction with the informant, as well as the spontaneity of speech considering the presence of the interviewer in an interview situation. This study aims to provide a brief theoretical contribution on the subject, illustrated with examples extracted from data collection for the Topodynamic and Topostatic Linguistic Atlas of Tocantins, in order to propose some guidelines for future field researchers, with the perspective of minimizing what is referred to as the "observer's paradox" in socio-dialectal research.

Keywords: Socio-dialectal research; power relations; observer's paradox.

Resumo: Há muitas discussões em torno de questões relacionadas à etapa inicial do trabalho dos dialetólogos e sociolinguistas: a coleta de dados in loco e a interação presencial com o informante, bem como a espontaneidade da fala considerando a presença do entrevistador em uma situação de entrevista. Este estudo tem como objetivo fornecer uma breve contribuição teórica sobre o

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assunto, ilustrada com exemplos extraídos da coleta de dados para o Atlas Linguístico Topodinâmico e Topostático de Tocantins, a fim de propor algumas diretrizes para futuros pesquisadores de campo, com a perspectiva de minimizar o que é referido como o "paradoxo do observador" na pesquisa sociodialetal.

Palavras-chave: Pesquisa sociodialetal; relações de poder; paradoxo do observador.

Résumé: Il existe plusieurs discussions qui abordent des questions liées à l'étape primordiale du travail des chercheurs en variation dialectale et sociolinguistique: la collecte de données sur place et l'interaction en face-à-face avec l'informateur, ainsi que la spontanéité du discours en tenant compte de la présence de l'intervieweur dans une situation d'entretien. L'objectif de cette étude est de fournir une contribution théorique concise sur le sujet, illustrée par des cas extraits de la collecte de données pour l'Atlas linguistique topodynamique et topostatique du Tocantins, afin d'établir quelques lignes directrices pour les futurs chercheurs sur le terrain, avec la perspective d'atténuer ce qui est appelé "paradoxe de l'observateur" dans les recherches sociodialectales.

Mots-clés: Recherche sociodialectale; relations de pouvoir; paradoxe de l'observateur.

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Introduction

The sciences of variation, such as Dialectology, Geolinguistics, and Sociolinguistics, seek in field research their primary material for description and analysis, directly collecting vernacular language from the responsible agent of variation and language change: the speaker. Over the years, since the initial concerns raised by Jules Gilliéron in his "Atlas Linguistique de la France" (ALF), various techniques have emerged to minimize the effects and "power relations" established between interviewer and interviewee, avoiding potential researcher influences or interference in the obtained results.

According to Michel Foucault (1998, p. 143), power is conceived as a relation, unlike classical Marxist thought. It is not limited to institutionalization by the Ideological State Apparatuses (ALTHUSSER, 1992) nor restricted to economic issues, social class, or the individual's role in production relations. For Foucault, power is a dynamic relation (FOUCAULT, 1998, p. 175-248), an exercise that occurs asymmetrically in any environment. The presence of this asymmetry reveals the imbalance in this relation. Thus,

according to Foucault (2006, p. 231), no one is excluded from power relations, as power manifests itself as a network of interconnected relations (FOUCAULT, 1998, p. 248). This web involves numerous ties (FOUCAULT, 2006, p. 330), in which everyone exercises power while also being subjected to its exercise.

In Foucauldian power relations, no one always possesses an absolute monopoly; there is a constant alternation. This relation is asymmetric, in which the controller and the controlled (FOUCAULT, 1994) frequently switch positions. This dynamic is present in all spaces and situations. For the author, power relations are not subject to negotiation; they are not something acquired or lost (not even something concrete, as it is an exercise). Power is rooted in micro-relations in social groups and permeates all levels of these interactions (FOUCAULT, 2006, p. 244).

These complex power associations direct social relations, as power emanates from all spheres of life in society. It is decentralized, asymmetric, and capillary (FOUCAULT, 1998, p. 250; 2006, p. 161), creating room for new forms of social control.

When applying Foucault's thinking to sociolinguistic field research, we can understand that power relations between the interviewer and the informant somehow interfere with responses to more subjective questions, such as linguistic beliefs and attitudes, among other aspects. The researcher's presence creates an unequal power relationship, as they can easily be perceived as representing the Education/University Institution, exerting more significant influence over the informant/society. At the same time, the informant holds significant power over the researcher, as the University/Research Institution is directly funded by society and represented by the informant during the interview. These are complex relationships characterized by power asymmetry, which varies depending on the adopted perspective.

According to Thun (2017 [2015]), the importance of this interactional dynamics lies mainly in the fact that the informant will only use their truly spontaneous speech, which is the object of sociolinguistic data collection, with people they trust, avoiding strangers or individuals outside the community, such as the interviewer. This issue will be discussed in "On-site data collection and the relationship between Interviewer and Informant." The text "Dialectal data and the interviewer's conduct: some practical examples" situations that have occurred and ways to approach them during the

interview/research are presented, aiming to illustrate the theme more clearly. Finally, the text concludes with "possible approaches" and some paths that researchers/interviewers can follow to minimize, as much as possible, the asymmetrical power relations in the Foucauldian web.

1. The dynamic between informant and inquirer in data collection

Sciences such as Dialectology, Geolinguistics, and Sociolinguistics, which employ field research to build their corpora, have their initial methodological foundations rooted in the Neogrammarian movement, as pointed out by Câmara Jr. (2006, p. 105). This approach brought greater scientific rigor to linguistic studies, presenting more precise principles for the science of language.

Despite the criticisms regarding the Neogrammarian precepts concerning language variation and change, the methodological rigor advocated by this school led to the improvement of empirical techniques for analyzing language phenomena and providing fertile ground for academic debates on the subject. In this contrasting array of ideas, the conceptions of Shuchardt (1842-1927) and Meillet (1866-1936) are significant, as they emphasize the importance of analyzing the speaker and their social context to understand how linguistic changes take place (FARACO, 2005).

In this fruitful scenario, the works of Jules Gilliéron gained prominence in France, along with the linguistics-dialectological methodology based on field research, where data is collected directly from those responsible for the variations: the speakers³. Specifically, in the case of the ALF - Atlas Linguistique de la France, Gilliéron enlisted the collaboration of the non-linguist Edmond Edmont as his interviewer/field researcher⁴. Jules avoided any "touches" to the collected data, which could occur if a linguist or philologist were responsible for the collection (VENY, 1985; BRANDÃO, 1991). In other words, Gilliéron was already aware that the researcher-interviewer might make

³ According to Pop (1950, p. 109), before Gilliéron, Charles Joret had collected data in loco for his work "Flore populaire de la Normandie" (Popular Flora of Normandy) (Paris, Maisonneuve, 1887, in-80, LXXXVIII-338 p.).

⁴ To discuss the requirements to become a field researcher in sociolinguistic research, refer to Silva and Aguilera's (2009) article "Brazilian linguistic atlases and the inquirer: in search of an adequate methodology." The article explores the complexities of the inquirer-informant relationship within the context of Brazilian linguistic atlases, aiming to establish a suitable methodology for data collection. Further details and insights can be found in the article at: <https://www.uel.br/revistas/uel/index.php/signum/article/view/4247/4607>, accessed on January 27, 2022.

adjustments, corrections, or linguistic guidance during the interviews.

Indeed, Jules Gilliéron's genuine concern led him to adopt specific procedures to minimize the presence of the interviewer and their potential influence on the interviewee's responses. Decades later, Harald Thun revisited this approach and referred to it as the "reduction method" in his works on Pluridimensional and Relational Geolinguistics. This method involves conditioning the informant in a standardized manner through quick questions that allow only the first dialectal response without allowing for elaboration, corrections, or comments (THUN 2017 [2005], p. 86-87). Unfortunately, this technique excludes the possibility of collecting intraindividual data, that is, questions related to diachronic variation, such as different interlocutions, speech contexts, or reflections on language and its context of use (metalinguistic and epilinguistic aspects).

Despite the effects of Gilliéron's method, it is undeniable that the ALF has provided new theoretical and methodological horizons for linguistic research. With the direct recording of older forms, it has been possible to supplement the investigations previously conducted solely on archaic texts, enabling real-time data analysis in language change (FARACO, 2005, p. 183).

Throughout the centuries, different theories and approaches have contributed to distinct directions in data collection, such as the emergence of Sociolinguistics in the American scientific context in the 1960s. In contrast to Dialectology, which focuses on geographic variation, Sociolinguistics aims to collect data on the social aspect, considering the convergence between linguistic variants and extralinguistic variables such as age, gender, and education within a social context. In this regard, the approach proposed by Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog (1968) highlights the issues that any variation theory must address: conditioning factors, transition, embedding, evaluation, and implementation.

Specifically, regarding evaluation, which is the fourth problem mentioned, one of the fundamental questions addressed in this article emerges. It concerns the analysis of how community members perceive linguistic change and how this valuation by speakers can influence processes of variation and change. This type of analysis involves subjective aspects, both in data collection and interpretation, and seeks support from other fields of knowledge, such as Social Psychology.

It is essential to mention that the subjectivity present in field research was already a concern for Labov, as evidenced by his well-known observer's paradox. Linguistic research in a community aims to discover how people speak when they are not being systematically observed, but obtaining such data is only possible through systematic observation.

The interview situation and the presence of the researcher, often unknown to the informant, create a barrier that hinders the collection of pure vernacular without monitoring. To minimize the interviewer's effect on the interviewee, Labov (2008) provides methodological guidelines, such as diverting the informant's attention with pauses during the interview, eliciting questions or narratives that involve the informant's emotions, and using "natural groups" where the inquirer may or may not be present.

In Brazil, the Urban Cultivated Norm Project (Projeto Norma Urbana Culta or NURC), which emerged in the 1970s, pioneered more refined techniques for systematically collecting linguistic data. The project was based on the Proyecto de Estudio Coordinado de la Norma Lingüística Culta de las Principales Ciudades de Iberoamérica y de la Península Ibérica. In the Brazilian context, the NURC was responsible for data collection in five capital cities: Recife, Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Porto Alegre, with stratified informants, including university students and individuals from different age groups (NURC, RJ, n.d.⁵).

In terms of data collection methods, the NURC primarily encompassed three modalities: formal speeches (lectures and conferences), dialogues between the informant and the Documenter on pre-established topics (DID), and dialogues between two informants (D2). The project aimed to include various forms of data collection to minimize the observer's paradox and promote more spontaneous speech, particularly by adopting Labov's premises on "natural groups," identified in the NURC as the D2 pattern.

A similar discussion a few decades earlier can be found in Jaberg and Jud (1928, p. 180 apud THUN, 2017, p. 88), specifically in dialectal research. The authors emphasized that the artificially created interview situation, in which informants are unfamiliar with the interviewer, leads them to make responsive choices that seek to please and impress the inquirer, resembling a school environment. It is like having a teacher

⁵ Available at: <https://nurcrj.lettras.ufrj.br/>. It was accessed on February 18, 2022.

asking questions from a questionnaire, where the student (informant) aims to provide the "correct" answer to the teacher (the inquirer). It is common to observe this attitude in linguistic surveys, where the informant seeks confirmation from the inquirer after responding: "Is that right?" "Is that correct?"

The success of social interaction often relies on the ability to infer or deduce the nature of others' thoughts, feelings, and reactive tendencies based on subtle behavioral cues. It is a common feature of human cognition to make inferences about the attitudes of others and regulate our actions accordingly (LAMBERT; LAMBERT, 1972, p. 79).

In this situation, we are dealing with an interview, but we cannot ignore that it is an "artificial" context, similar to a school environment. The presence of someone asking questions puts the interviewer in a position of "intellectual superiority." The interviewee may feel the need to validate their answers. In this sense, extralinguistic factors related to the interviewer can influence the response, such as eye contact, raising an eyebrow, or facial and body expressions that may or may not indicate approval of the answer. Therefore, the interview setting always presents a "false normality" because the interviewee is constantly being "questioned." How the interview is conducted, the researcher's actions, linguistic variety, and lexical choices influence the interviewee's comfort level with the interview context.

According to Lambert and Lambert (1972, p. 105), the effectiveness of the questionnaire technique is often limited because respondents, even when responding anonymously, become suspicious and need help accurately expressing their thoughts and feelings.

Recently, with the advancement of Pluridimensional and Relational Geolinguistics, there has been a wide discussion about this scenario and the testing of new data collection methods. According to Thun (2017 [2005]), the duration of the interview itself can be a significant factor in determining the degree of intimacy between the interviewer and interviewee. In other words, the longer the interview, the closer the relationship between them will be, which can be observed in the ADDU - Atlas Lingüístico y Diastrático del Uruguay data⁶, with surveys lasting approximately 16 hours,

⁶ For a research report, see Semino (2009): La experiencia metodológica del Atlas Lingüístico Diatópico Y Diastrático del Uruguay (ADDU). Available at: <http://repositorio.furg.br/handle/1/2468>. Accessed on February 03, 2022.

and ALGR - Atlas Lingüístico Guarani-Românico, which lasted 8 to 10 hours, for example. Hypothetically, throughout the interview, the informant becomes more familiar with the interviewer, reducing their level of self-monitoring in speech⁷.

Indeed, in Sociolinguistics, Lambert and Lambert refer to the matched guise technique to analyze the inference and measurement of attitudes provided by the informant regarding metalinguistic and epilinguistic issues. This technique involves presenting different speech samples to the informant, disguising the speakers' social characteristics or language varieties to assess the attitudes and perceptions associated with those variations. It allows researchers to investigate implicit biases and attitudes towards different linguistic features without directly asking for them, providing valuable insights into language attitudes and their sociolinguistic implications.

According to Botassini (2013), the matched guise approach involves presenting a group of "judges," who are listeners responsible for making judgments, with recordings of perfectly bilingual speakers reading the same passage of text on two different occasions: first in their native language (e.g., French) and then in another language (e.g., English). The judges are instructed to listen to the recordings and evaluate the personal characteristics of each speaker based on vocal and reading cues. During this evaluation, positive and negative characteristics related to competence (e.g., intelligence, self-confidence, ambition), personal integrity (sincerity, character, reliability), and social attractiveness (sociability, empathy, sense of humor) are presented. However, the judges must be aware that the same individuals are alternating between reading the text in different languages (BOTASSINI, 2013, p. 54).

The study using this approach was conducted in Montreal, Canada, to investigate the reactions of different groups to recordings recited in French and English. Lambert and Lambert note that English speakers were evaluated more positively, indicating they were perceived as taller, more intelligent, confident, and friendly (1972). This may suggest social stigmatization towards the Franco-Canadian minority group.

The proposed analysis in Lambert and Lambert's theory is crucial as it seeks a

⁷ In this regard, the Linguistic Atlas of Brazil project included Beliefs and Attitudes questions at the end of the Questionnaire, when several hours have already passed, and there is more significant interaction between the informant and the inquirer. This approach is followed by many dialectal works, such as the Topodynamic and Topostatic Linguistic Atlas of Tocantins (ALiTTETO).

form of blind evaluation using a graded scale. In theory, it is expected that the interviewee accesses their cognitive mechanisms and provides spontaneous responses about the speech of other groups. However, we must consider an issue: Is it possible to maintain authenticity and spontaneity of speech in an interview situation? The pioneers of the theory provide the answer, as they indicate that most people provide incomplete, superficial, and distorted descriptions of their attitudes when asked to express or examine them (LAMBERT; LAMBERT, 1972, p. 80). In other words, the speaker will "mask" their perceptions according to the linguistic behavior expected by the interviewer.

Brait (1999) states that in the process of interaction⁸ present in a dialogue, several implicit factors directly influence, in this case, the responses regarding linguistic beliefs and attitudes:

1. Power structures play an essential role in verbal interaction, considering factors such as gender, age, marital status, educational background, profession, and the corresponding rights of the participants involved in the communicative situation (BRAIT, 1999, p. 193).

2. The dimension of the "unsaid" is a relevant aspect to consider when analyzing respondents' answers in a questionnaire. Non-verbal elements such as gestures, intonation, and facial expressions are present in the interaction and contribute to the dynamics of the interview event. Speakers apply their linguistic skills and non-linguistic competencies, allowing for understanding in different communicative contexts.

3. The language game is manifested in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, resulting in the construction of a "text" in which each plays a role. This process can be guided by an implicit or explicit hierarchy and subjective-positions⁹ Are employed to influence the interlocutor. These manifestations are intrinsically linked to the sociocultural, historical, and discursive context in which they occur.

4. The evaluative gaze assigns the interviewee the sensation of being

⁸ "Interaction is a component of communication, meaning-making, and construction, and it is part of every act of language. It is a sociocultural phenomenon with linguistic and discursive characteristics that can be observed, described, analyzed, and interpreted" (BRAIT, 1999, p. 194).

⁹ "Every human individual, that is, social, can only be an agent of practice if they assume the form of the subject. The 'subject-form,' in fact, in the form of the historical existence of any individual, an agent of social practices" (ALTHUSSER, 1978, p. 67).

observed. At the same time, the researcher/interviewer is endowed with evaluative competence to analyze the linguistic and extralinguistic aspects that may influence or guide the interviewee's responses. This gaze can impact the interactive process between interviewer and interviewee, potentially interfering with or guiding the responses provided by the informant.

When introducing and discussing the ongoing research, the researcher raises the interviewee's awareness that their language is being subjected to analysis, prompting the inquirer to monitor it carefully. The inquirer seeks to elaborate, reformulate, and even self-repair their speech to align it with the interviewer's expectations. In some instances, "hypercorrection" occurs, manifesting as the inclusion of pronouns in positions deemed prestigious as an attempt to impress the researcher/interviewer.

Furthermore, the presence of the recorder also influences how the interviewee maintains their "public linguistic image." Being heard by the interviewer during the interview and by others who will have access to their responses, including the academic institution (university), makes the interviewee concerned with demonstrating an approved and recognized language. This social construction of self-public image also seeks approval and recognition from implicit listeners (BROWN; LEVINSON, 1978 apud BRAIT, 1999, p. 198-199).

Therefore, considering the aspects presented, it becomes evident that the construction of the interactional process is complex and directly impacts the responses obtained regarding linguistic beliefs and, more importantly, attitudes.

2. The Inquirer and the Field Interview: Practical Examples of Conduct in Dialectological Research

As discussed so far in socio-dialectal research, dialectology, and sociolinguistics, conducting field studies and utilizing subdivided questionnaires to address uniformly different aspects of language is of utmost importance. In the case of the "Topodynamic and Topostatic Linguistic Atlas of Tocantins" (ALiTTETO¹⁰), the questionnaire is

¹⁰ The respective linguistic atlas was conducted as a doctoral thesis affiliated with the Graduate Program in Language Studies at the State University of Londrina, Brazil, under the guidance of Dr. Vanderci de Andrade Aguilera. The study involved data collection in 12 locations within the state of Tocantins, a region in the Brazilian Amazon, with 96 informants stratified by gender, age, and type of mobility (topostatic and topodynamic), following the theoretical and methodological principles of Pluridimensional and Relational

divided into four main categories: 1) Phonetic-phonological, 2) Semantic-lexical, 3) Morphosyntactic, and 4) Beliefs and attitudes.

In the phonetic-phonological¹¹ Sub-questionnaire aims to investigate the different realizations of sounds and their combinations. In this regard, the questions are formulated to elicit specific responses related to predetermined phonetic items, utilizing the "trigger effect." Through an onomasiological question, the interviewer obtains a response that allows for the subsequent analysis of a particular sound aspect.

In a study on the subject, Yida, Gholmie, and Vasconcelos (2018) describe the strategies used by researchers of the Linguistic Atlas of Brazil (ALiB) to obtain the item "aftosa"¹². Moreover, verify if there is a record of the phonetic-phonological process known as *suarabácti* or *anaptixe* - which consists of the insertion of the vowels /e/ or /i/ in the pronunciation, resulting in *af[e]tosa* or *af[i]tosa* -, with or without *aphaeresis* (elimination of the first vowel of the word).

Based on the data analyzed by the authors, the lack of familiarity with the requested referent in this type of question may be related to the non-usage of that term. It was found that the term "aftosa" is more easily recognized by informants in the Central-West region of Brazil, where cattle farming is more common than in the Southeast region, for example.

According to Yida, Gholmie, and Vasconcelos (2018), in dialectal research, it is essential to consider the background knowledge of both the interviewer regarding the historical, economic, and social reality of the region under study and the informant, who may incorporate the variant as part of their active vocabulary. It is essential to recognize that, in some cases, the informant may be unable to recall the mentioned variant, as it is not present in their everyday lexical repertoire (p. 51).

In addition to the potential need for more familiarity of the interviewee with a particular item, data collection through the Phonetic-Phonological Questionnaire (QFF) presents other challenges. A common problem interviewers face is fatigue resulting from the intense workload, which can lead to premature answers during question formulation.

Geolinguistics (RADKE; THUN, 1996). The thesis is available at: <http://www.bibliotecadigital.uel.br/document/?code=vtls000218332>.

¹¹ In ALiTTETO, 105 questions from this sub-questionnaire were applied.

¹² A highly contagious disease that affects cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats is caused by a virus and can cause significant economic losses in the livestock industry.

For example, the interviewer should ask the informant about the object used to consume soup, with the phonetic item being "spoon," but ends up pronouncing the item in the formulation of the question.

¹³INT: **The spoon** is eaten with a fork and knife. And soup, what is it taken with?
INF: With a **spoon**, right? (02 - Araguatins).

Or in another example where the interviewer was seeking the item "number":

INT: **Fourteen** is not a **number**; it's a letter. Fourteen, by the way; sorry, fourteen is not a letter; it is what?
INF: **Number** (laughs).

On the other hand, within the context of the Phonetic-Phonological Questionnaire (QFF), we find an interesting example of a data collection strategy, as demonstrated in the following excerpt. In this question, the item "ferro elétrico" (mid vowel /e/ in a pretonic context) is sought, using an association with a type of iron commonly used in Brazil, the "ferro à brasa," which is often unknown to younger speakers. The interviewee, a young person¹⁴, struggles to provide the requested answer, but when the interviewer reformulates the question using a reference more related to the interviewee's experience, a positive result is obtained, as exemplified in the following fragment:

INT: In the past, people used the coal iron to iron clothes, and nowadays, what do they use? INF: Iron. Yeah... INT: Is it still the coal iron?
INF: No.
INT: What is it then?
INF: I only know it as an iron for ironing. I can't remember the name. INT: For example, what is the name of that fence people put on top of the wall?
INF: **Electric** fence?
INT: And what about the iron?
INF: Electric (laughs) I know it more as an iron for ironing; I had never heard it called that way. Electric iron. (01 - Araguatins).

¹³ INT: is the abbreviation for "Interviewer," and INF: is for "Informant."

¹⁴ The "ferro à brasa" was a historical utensil used for ironing clothes, heated directly on hot coals or the stove before being employed in smoothing garments. It is impossible to determine with precision when this device persisted in different regions of Brazil because its utilization depended on the socioeconomic conditions of families, whether they had the means to afford electricity or acquire an electric iron.

In contrast to the Phonetic-Phonological Subquestionnaire (QFF), the Semantic-Lexical Subquestionnaire (QSL) aims to obtain different denominations for the same referent, allowing the interviewee to respond to the questions based on their linguistic variant, personal experience, and objects present in their dialectal reality. In this sense, this part of the questionnaire requires greater attention from the interviewer to verify if the interviewee has appropriately understood what is being asked and, if not, to be able to reformulate the question appropriately.

Our QSL included 170 questions distributed across 14 semantic fields, and it was observed that those fields involving concepts less present in the interviewee's universe presented more incredible difficulty, such as geographic accidents, atmospheric phenomena, celestial bodies, weather, and agricultural activities. On the other hand, fields related to social interaction and behavior, children's games and amusements, and clothing and accessories presented a low degree of difficulty.

The main obstacles encountered in obtaining the responses are related to the disuse of linguistic terms by the interviewees. Thus, questions related to the physical world and natural phenomena are more challenging, both for the interviewees and the interviewers, especially for younger individuals who may need to become more familiar with the objectives of the questionnaire. In the case of ALiTTETO, three of the four interviewers were young individuals under 25, university students, and urban dwellers. Some lack of skill in formulating and reformulating questions was observed, as well as a need for knowledge in specific semantic fields, especially those related to the rural world.¹⁵

The interviewers consistently used a formal vocabulary during the data collection, possibly stemming from their university experience, employing more sophisticated words during the interaction with the interviewees. This situation is directly related to the "power relations" between the interviewer as a representative of the university institution and the use of a more complex vocabulary. Another minor slip-up on the part of the interviewer is anticipating certain parts of the response, perhaps due to anxiety, as in the case of:

INT: And when someone doesn't have something, they say it's like a bull without...?

¹⁵ In their study on the topic, Silva and Borges (2019) analyze the rural traits in the lexicon related to agropastoral activities, explicitly focusing on question 028: "ponta roxa do cacho da bananeira" (purple tip of the banana bunch). They observe a high rate of non-responses (24%) from the 96 informants, who are predominantly young individuals.

INF: Horns?

A more problematic example arises in the following case, wherein the interviewer modified the requested referent in the question aiming to elicit variants for the protrusion on the upper part of the male neck, commonly known as "Adam's apple" or "gogó." However, the interviewer's formulation was directed towards a different "item type."

INF: [what is it called] And this part... **it's like a disease** that happens, where it becomes enlarged?

INF: **Adam's apple, goiter.**

Goiter is a condition in which the throat region swells due to an enlargement of the thyroid gland, which significantly differs from the objective of the Questionnaire regarding designations for the laryngeal prominence, more commonly known as "Adam's apple" or "goiter," which refers to a physical characteristic.

In this sense, the entire team must be familiar with the questionnaire, the type of information to be collected, and the possible strategies to achieve the objectives. Training sessions and dialogue among the team members are necessary, along with conducting experimental inquiries, as recommended by the Atlas Linguístico do Brasil Project, where prospective interviewers should "submit an experimental inquiry for evaluation by a committee member" (COMITÊ NACIONAL, Ata da XVII Reunião, 2004).

The Beliefs and Attitudes Linguistic questionnaire is another sub-questionnaire in which the interviewer's role is crucial for subsequent corpus analyses. It seeks linguistic and metalinguistic accounts from the informants to examine their opinions on language-related issues. ALiTTETO has nine opinion-based questions: "1. How do you/you (formally) call the language you speak?"; "2. Are there people who speak differently here in _____ (mention the city where you are)? If yes, identify the groups that speak differently. Can you give examples?"; "3. Are these ways of speaking considered beautiful or ugly?" for example.

Inquiries of this kind have been of great importance in explaining the mechanisms of diffusion and propagation of linguistic variants within a particular community. Researchers have identified three types of speaker attitudes in this type of data collection: positive attitude, when the informant evaluates their way of speaking or that of others in

a positive light; negative attitude, when there is an unfavorable view towards accents or other linguistic issues; and neutral attitude, when the speaker does not display either positive or negative attitudes.

Indeed, when analyzing the excerpts where we could interpret that the speaker adopted a neutral stance, this issue is more related to the interviewer and interviewee interaction. This neutrality allows the subject not to take a discursive position. In other words, even when not expressing an opinion, there is an implicit positioning, a form of silence that reveals a specific opinion. It is possible that when the subject cannot verbalize their position, they do not want to express their ideological viewpoint to the interlocutor, either out of shame or to avoid contradicting the interviewer.

INT: Do people speak differently here in Pedro Afonso?

INF: Not that I know of.

INT: Don't you think people here speak differently?

INF: ...

INT: You said there are no different ways of speaking, but have you never heard anyone speaking differently? For example, the three of us here, didn't you notice that both of us speak differently from you?

INF: ...

INT: Our teacher, didn't you realize that she speaks differently?

INF: No, I didn't notice.

In other words, in the reports, the neutral attitude is related to an attempt to not take a stance in front of the interviewer due to the fear of being "evaluated" or judged by them. Another aspect observed in the reports is a form of induction on the part of the inquirer when they realize that the informant is being evasive in their answers, especially in questions that investigate possible negative perceptions, such as the existence of any speech considered ugly, among other examples.

2

INQ: Are there people who speak differently here in Palmas?

INF: There are.

INQ: There are, right? Where do you see that it's different from here? Because you're from here yourself. Whom do you notice speaking differently, for example?

INF: **It's like the Gauchos, the people from Minas Gerais, those.**

INQ: We have a little bit of everything here, right?

INF: We do.

3

INQ: Do you find these different ways of speaking ugly or beautiful, Mr. Luiz?

INF: **It's normal.**

INQ: Really? But is there none that **bothers** you?

INF: There isn't. (06/3).

Upon noticing the informant's evasiveness in response to the questions, the interviewer probes whether other forms of speech "bother" them, implying an adverse judgment. A similar situation arises in the following formulation: INT: Do you like the way people from Rio de Janeiro speak, or not really, right? INF: No, I don't... I'm not really like that. (laughs) It has a somewhat pretentious tone, you know, kind of... an accent... (laughs)" (emphasis added).

The researcher needs to adopt strategies to navigate power dynamics and foster empathy from the interviewee. The dialogue should be pleasant to reduce the asymmetry of power relations, which may not be immediately apparent but are present, especially in the dynamics of questioning and answering. It is necessary to establish a connection, a bond that makes the time together less tiresome and allows the interviewee to feel comfortable in responding as honestly as possible. When the researcher seeks "positive reinforcement," the need to create a bond with the interviewee becomes evident, which can lead to biased responses. If this friendly relationship is not established, the interviewee's response may be evasive or tend towards neutrality. In other words, when empathy is not established in the interaction, the results of the questionnaire on language beliefs and attitudes can also be compromised.

Possible directions and final considerations

With the early studies conducted in Dialectology, a concern that persists over time arises: the data collection and interaction between researcher and interviewee, a concern already evidenced by Gilliéron in his Linguistic Atlas of France. Since then, techniques and types of questionnaires have been tested to overcome what is now known in Sociolinguistics as the "observer's paradox." This text aims to function as a linguistic kaleidoscope, addressing various theories and their ramifications to propose discussions and guidance for dialectological practice.

In collecting dialectal data, the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee can be characterized by a power relationship in which the former may convey a sense of "intellectual superiority." At the same time, the latter may perceive the

questionnaire as a cognitive test resembling a school situation where the teacher (interviewer) seeks "correct" answers.

However, it is essential to emphasize that the dialectal inquiry situation is an interaction between two individuals who usually have little or no prior knowledge of each other and communicate for a few hours. In this sense, the interviewer must remember that they are not the holder of truth, do not possess all knowledge, and allow the interviewee to express themselves in their dialogue freely.

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the field researcher to have a deep understanding of the overall research objectives and each item included in the questionnaire. Continuous training is essential for the team, preferably with regular meetings for discussion and adjustments. It is also vital for the team to discuss strategies for handling items that present a higher degree of difficulty. Before going into the field, each team member should conduct experimental inquiry test interviews to experience challenging situations and allow the researcher to encounter as many difficulties as possible, thus developing a good sense of inquiry.

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