

## **The importance of the lexicon in determining the directionality of a phonological change**

Marcelo A. S. L. Melo and Christina A. Gomes (*Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro*)

The directionality of a change has been detected in terms of the distribution of variants according to the main independent variables of the apparent time construct (age, social class, sex/gender and speech style) and, when possible, confirmed in real time studies. Studies that have carried out regarding the speech community of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, have shown that this variety is characterized by a massive use of post-alveolar fricatives in coda. The described situation shows an advanced stage of a change towards the post-alveolar that, according to Silva Neto (1956), is either an independent process or a change in the direction of the prestige variant adopted from the Portuguese court installed in Brazil in 1808. There is no evidence for the latter hypothesis. The post-alveolar became a feature of regional identity for native speakers of Rio de Janeiro. Callou and Brandão (2009) conducted a real time study with university speakers, with data from 1970 and 1990, which shows that the change has reached the higher level for medial codas, respectively 85% and 95%, less perceptible for final codas, respectively 72% and 76%. The usage frequency of the stigmatized glottal is 1% for both internal and final codas. The same distribution was observed by Scherre and Macedo (2000) in speakers with high school-level or less, where the glottal reached 7%. Guy (1981) also showed that the glottal is the less frequent variant for working-class illiterate speakers. The present study compares the results obtained from two different samples: Censo 2000, with the same characteristics of Censo 1980, and a sample from lower class teenagers. The results of the real time study, comparing the results obtained by Scherre and Macedo (2000) using data from Censo 1980, showed the same situation observed by Callou and Brandão (2009): an increase in the use of the post-alveolar fricative and a decrease in the frequency of the glottal (3%). However, the lower class sample showed a presence of 30% of glottal, against 54% of post-alveolar codas. The difference isn't only related to the overall rates of the variants but also in terms of the way some words behave in the two samples. Some words (apparently the most frequent ones) are almost always realized with the glottal among lower class speakers, a behavior not registered among the speakers of Censo 2000 sample. In both samples a strong effect of following context and position of the coda (internal or final) was observed. Taken these facts into consideration, there are two possible scenarios to explain the observed distributions of the glottal. The difference between the two social groups is a difference in the frequency of the stigmatized variant or it is related to different directions of a change in the speech community. We argue that, although the same linguistic constraints are operating in the conditioning of the variation, it seems that there is a spread of the glottal among lower class speakers that can only be captured if we consider the word as an independent variable.