

## THE DELETION OF POSTONIC MEDIAL VOWEL IN TWO AFRICAN VARIETIES OF PORTUGUESE A PRELIMINARY STUDY

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The deletion of the medial postonic vowel, a process that culminates the regularization of proparoxytone words to the paroxytone pattern, is an old phenomenon in Portuguese. Gomes (2012), in a variationist analysis that contrasts the Brazilian Portuguese (BP) with the European Portuguese (EP), finds that in the EP erasure rule is more frequent than in the BP, a variety that can be considered conservative in terms of the configuration of the systems vowels, given the variation that still occurs in the context of the realization of the medium vowels in the unstressed pretonic context and the negative social valuation to which vowel deletion is subject. Gomes (no prelo), in a comparison between BP, EP and São Tomé Portuguese (STP), identifies in this a very particular behavior: high vowel deletion index in the postonic medial context, probably a reflection of the influence of creole that coexists with Portuguese in the area of data collection.

This paper proposes a comparison between the informants of the first São Tomé age group with data from individuals of the same profile extracted from the Portuguese Mozambican corpus (collected in Maputo in 2016). In Mozambique, Portuguese coexists with a wide variety of languages of the Bantu family. The hypothesis is that proparoxytones, unnatural even for speakers of Portuguese as L1 and that are not immersed in multilingual contexts, would be regularized to

paroxitones in the Mozambican variety - as is verified for the São Toméan data - as a contact effect of Portuguese with the other languages that coexist with it in the community.

For the hypothesis testing, 554 data were collected in 12 recorded data - six in São Tomé and six in Mozambique. The sub-sample for this preliminary study were stratified according to the variables gender and schooling. Data were also categorized according to the frequency of use of local languages (in São Tomé) and the acquisition of Portuguese as the first or second language (in Mozambique). The data, analyzed from the theoretical-methodological foundations of Theory of Variation and Change, were treated statistically from the GOLDVAR-BX program package. In this work, the effects of nine structural variables and five social variables were investigated.

The results reveal, in general terms, a similar behavior among the varieties: in both São Tomé and Mozambique there were expressive indices of erasure of the medial atonic vowel (around 30%). Similarities were observed in the performance of linguistic constraints. In both varieties, the contexts adjacent to the medial postonic vowel were decisive for the implementation of erasure, since the possibility of restructuring of the preceding and subsequent consonants towards the attack of the final atonic syllable is the constraint that conditions the deletion in the two sets of data.

Divergences were observed in the performance of social variables. Schooling acts differently for each variety. In the São Tomé data, the erasure rates of the medial postonics increase with the increase in schooling. The Mozambican data, on the other hand, reveal a favoring of the rule by the individuals of intermediate level of instruction. However, the results verified for the Mozambican speakers reflect much more the communicative profile of the informants than an effect of the contact with what would be prestigious in terms of norm.

Another difference is consistent in the performance of the variables that control the role of linguistic contact in the erasure of the medial atonic vowel. In São Tomé, contact with local languages seems to favor the erasure of the medial postonics. In Mozambique, however, the variables that account for the relationship between Portuguese and local languages were not relevant.

The results of this preliminary study show the possibility and necessity of a comparative treatment between the varieties of Portuguese spoken in São Tomé and in Mozambique in the analysis of the variable phenomenon of deletion of the medial postonic vowel. However, the results discussed here should not be taken as conclusive. It is recognized that there is a need for methodological procedures

that go beyond a purely quantitative description and that direct the study to a vertical analysis of each variety.

## REFERENCE

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