

STILL ON RTHOTICS IN PORTUGUESE IN MOZAMBIQUE

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In this chapter, we focus on rhotics in the urban variety of Portuguese of Mozambique (PM) in the light of theoretical and methodological assumptions of the Theory of Variation and Change (WEINREICH, LABOV; HERZOG, 1968) in order to discuss structural and social factors, which condition the use of variants of R in pre-vocalic position – as in *rosa* and *carro* – in the speech of individuals who use Portuguese as L1 (PL1) and L2 (PL2).

PM occurs in an environment of intense multilingualism. As pointed out by Chimbutane (2018), in the last 30 years, there was a decrease of 13.6% in the usage of Bantu languages, while Portuguese as L1 and L2 grew, respectively, 10.7% and 39.7%, in addition to the fact that the total number of Portuguese speakers reached 50.4% in 2007, which is, as Chimbutane observes, linked to educational policies practiced especially in the postcolonial era. Other researches also point out that none of Bantu languages is the majority one or is distributed throughout the country. In this sense, Macua, that has the largest number of users, was reported by 26.3% of the population (Censo1997), but in Maputo, where the present survey was conducted, the most frequent are, in descending order, Changana, Tshwa and Rhonga (INE 2010). As shown, the complexity of PM is great and its characteristics vary also regionally, due to languages spoken

in the capital and in different provinces. Therefore, we should consider the results of this research as a means of formulating hypotheses for future studies using *corpora* that include not only urban varieties.

Brandão; De Paula (2018) examined the rhotics, in pre and post-vocalic contexts, with the same Mozambican informants who contributed to this analysis. However, they focused the individuals on a different perspective, considering PL1 and PL2 speakers together. The results have motivated the continuity of the study, because the relevance of the variable *Portuguese Status* (L1 or L2) was demonstrated, especially in the intervocalic position. In this context, the tap was the most frequent variant for PL2 speakers. The results seemed to show that, in the grammar of most PM speakers, the [+ ant] and [-ant] rhotics, which act in the context of phonological opposition, both in European Portuguese (PE) and Brazilian Portuguese (PB), have suffered a process of neutralization in PM.

In this stage of analysis, Portuguese L1 speakers are focused in contrast to L2 ones. So, we focus the called “strong R” in the initial and *intervocalic positions*, seeking, among other objectives, to verify whether the factors that contribute, in each case, for the implementation of the tap are the same, and also whether the two rhotic phonemes are represented in the grammar of the upper-level individuals of these two social segments.

The variationist analyzes were performed with the support of GoldVarb-X Program and is based on samples selected from *Corpus* Mozambique-Port. The interviews were conducted with individuals living in the city of Maputo, thus having an urban profile. The 18 informants, from the general sample, were distributed by sex, three age ranges (18-35, 36-55, 56-75 years) and three levels of education (lower secondary, upper secondary and higher), also considering whether they are PL1 or PL2 users and their level of knowledge and use of other(s) language(s) spoken in Mozambique.

The results show a clear difference in the use of tap between PL1 and PL2. Among PL1 speakers, the tap alternates with the trill in a balanced way, bordering the 50% range, and the probability of applying the rule is neutral, with *input* .49. The PL2 speakers preferentially implement the tap, with *input* .83 and 77.6% of use.

Among the structural variables selected in the multivariate analysis, stand out *syllable tonicity* for both PL1 and PL2; *number of syllables*, for PL1; and *word class*, for L2.

Regarding PL1 speakers, those with a higher level of education are the ones that least implement the tap, with little difference between the age groups 1, 2

and 3 (P. R. .27, .29 and .35). Meanwhile, speakers with less education (lower and upper secondary) prefer tap (P. R. .97 and .64, in lower level, and .80 and .58, in upper level). The age group 1, starting the *continuum* of schooling, reach a percentage of 97.2% of tap and P. R. .97. For all this, the increase in schooling seems clearly to inhibit the use of the tap in place of the trill.

In intervocalic context, the presence of the tap as an option for the “strong R” among PL1 and PL2 speakers is notorious and it confirms to be a very prominent feature of Portuguese spoken in Mozambique, distinct from PE and PB. In this context, the different performances of PL1 and PL2 speakers become even more evident. The former apply tap in 38.5% of the cases and the latter in 79.4%. The first of these indexes, although equal to half of the second one, is expressive, since it is a context of phonological opposition. Thus, in PM in general, that opposition seems to express some level of instability. Regarding the L1 speakers, only the composite variable *level of education/age group* was relevant and, among the L2 ones, the social variable *sex*, in addition to *subsequent context* to R.

In both contexts, besides the relevance of structural factors, the significant performance of social variables, such the composite variable *level of education/age group*, is clear and it corroborates Chimbutane’s observation that PM, in relation to PE, constitutes a lectal *continuum*.

The results show, on the one hand, the complexity of the emergent Mozambican variety of Portuguese, both as L1 and as L2; on the other, the importance of the variable *level of education/age group*, besides others that contribute for the observed variation. In addition, the results seem to ratify and exemplify Chimbutane’s (2018) observations, when he makes a critical appraisal of educational policies in the colonial and postcolonial eras, which are responsible for the “current state of nativization of Portuguese in Mozambique” (page 95).

Chimbutane points out, in these public policies, three stages as regards the measures adopted in the teaching of Portuguese: (i) the first one, which persisted until 1979, did not clarify the purpose of teaching European Portuguese as L2 nor the role of students’ first language; (ii) the second one, from 1979 to 1990, reaffirmed Portuguese as the language of national unity and incentivized its massive use, for the purpose of to develop a nativized variety and its subsequent standardization; (iii) the third phase, which extends from 1990 on aims to repair the failure of the previous one, with the inclusion in the Constitution of an article which establishes the promotion, by the State, of the development and increase of the use of African languages in life education. Thereby, the conditions for a

higher contact between Portuguese and other languages – and, consequently, more chances of their nativization – would have been increased.

It is possible to formulate the hypothesis that the variation found in the PM, especially in the PM L2, is due not only to the contact with the Bantu languages, as, in the case of Maputo, Changana, but also with the EP, a variety of Portuguese in which: (a) the minimal pairs, in the context of phonological opposition, have very low productivity; and (b) the tap has a larger distribution than the other variants. Moreover, the articulatory difference between a tap and an alveolar trill consists basically, as Lindau (1985) states, in one beat or more than one beat in the alveoli, which may not be salient for the individual who adopted the Portuguese language (BRANDÃO; DE PAULA, 2018). Thus, everything indicates that, in the PM phonological level, there is only one R and that this variation depends on factors mainly of a social nature, although an overview of the behavior of the rhotics in this variety still depends on the results of newly initiated researches which focus the R in complex onset (as in *preso, quatro*) and in the intervocalic R position (in contexts as *caro, senhora* and *espera*).

These analyzes contributed to emphasize the complexity that characterizes the Mozambican society, in which numerous native languages contribute to the definition of the sociolinguistic identity of its individuals. In this sense, future research must, including other aspects, to be based on samples that take into account people with different profiles, in other urban areas and in rural areas, with low or null level of education, users of different Bantu languages, as states Chimbutane (2018). Only then it will be possible to prove the hypothesis here defended, that, despite the variation, in the PM grammar there is only one **rhotic** phoneme.

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