Person as a case of indexicalization in Brazilian Portuguese

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Introduction

The aim of this work is to show the pronominalization process of referential expressions such as *a bicha* (the faggot) in Brazilian Portuguese (BP) within a specific community of practice. From a parallel with the grammaticalization of the well-known BP pronoun *a gente* (the folk), I assume that *a bicha* is a case of an indexical in such language, and its recategorization is due to its internal feature reorganization. Thus, I will offer an analysis in which this type of referential expression suffers a kind of "personalization", i.e., referential expression used as speech participants, acting as the first person, like in (1), and as the second person, like in (2) and (3).

(1) A   bicha$_{1sg}$ foi ver   o   boy mas ele era uó.
    The faggot$_{1sg}$ was to.see the boy but he was awful
     "I (emphatic) went to see him but he was awful"

(2) A   bicha$_{2sg}$ tá fazendo o   quê tão quietinha?
    The faggot$_{2sg}$ is doing   the what so quiet.DIM?
     "What are you (emphatic) doing so quietly?"

(3) Eu vim só   ver   a   bicha$_{2sg}$ e ela me   trata assim.
    I   came only to.see the faggot$_{2sg}$ and she Cl.1.sg treat like.that
     "I came only to see you (emphatic) and you treat me badly"

On the pronominalization of *a gente*

According to Lopes (2003, p. 73-74), in the systematization of person features, it has been proposed that the pronominalized form *a gente* (the folk) would have inherited the formal feature [feu] from the noun which originates it, since it has continued, at least among the educated speakers, to be combined with the 3rd person verbal morphology – the default person, according to Rooryck (1994) or the non-person for Benveniste (1966). However, in terms of semantic person, there has been change in interpretation in that it starts to cover the enlarged-I: the feature is no [feu] anymore and is altered to [+eu] in the pronominal form. Such postulation can be countersigned by two syntactic evidences: the first one would be the pronominal co-reference with the 1st person plural, very frequent in non-standard Portuguese and the second, the pronominal co-reference with *nosso(s)/nossa(s)* (1st person plural possessives):

 (4) *A   gente$_i$* (aquela *gente*) pegou   a comida *dela*$_{i/j}$ / a *sua*$_{i/j}$ comida
      The folk$_i$ (that.fem folk) take.PAST.3sg the food of.she$_{i/j}$/ the POSS.fem$_{i/j}$ food
                                                                  (*a gente* = noun)
(5) A   gente$_i$ pegou   a comida *dela*$_{i*/j}$/ a *sua*$_{i*/j}$ comida
      The folk$_i$ take.PAST.3sg the food of.she$_{i*/j}$/ the POSS.fem$_{i*/j}$ food
                                                                  (*a gente* = pronoun)
(6) *A   gente$_i$* (aquela *gente*) pegou   a *nossa*$_{i*/j}$ comida
     The folk$_i$ (that.fem folk) take.PAST.3sg the our.fem$_{i*/j}$ food
                                                                  (*a gente* = noun)
(7) *A   gente$_i$* pegou   a *nossa*$_{i/j*}$ comida
     The folk$_i$ take.PAST.3sg the our.fem$_{i/j*}$ food   (*a gente* = pronoun)

                                                                  (LOPES, 2003, p. 74)

Lopes (2003) assumes that what controls the degree of reference (indeterminacy) of *gente* and *a gente* is the *indefiniteness hierarchy* (adapted from GIVÓN, 1979; CROFT, 1993). The reference of *a gente* would be distributed into a *continuum*: from the maximal definiteness/referentiality degree as in (8a) to the minimal definiteness/referentiality degree as in (8d), with two intermediate degrees ((8b) and (8c)). (8) represents the distribution of the relevant features for the referential *continuum*: [± definite], [± referential], and [± specific]. Figure 1 allots these features into the *continuum*.

(8) Referentiality degree (LOPES, 2003, p. 94-96)

   (a) [+definite] [+referential] [+specific]

   (b) [+definite][+referential] [−specific]

   (c) [−definite] [+referential] [−specific]

   (d) [−definite][− referential][− specific]

(*a gente* = noun)   (*a gente* = pronoun)

| [−definite][− referential] [− specific] | [−definite] [+referential] [−specific] | [+definite][+referential] [−specific] | [+definite] [+referential] [+specific] |

Fig. 1: Definiteness/referentiality hierarchy

On the pronominalization of *a bicha: some (preliminary) analysis*

I argue that *a bicha* (the faggot) and its correlated expressions (*o viado* (the deer), *a passiva* (the bottom), *a gata* (the cat.fem)) show a light process of pronominalization, i.e. those expressions are used as pronouns by a group of speakers referring to themselves and this reference is only allowed within the community, meaning nothing but an R-expression outside it. This is so by the assimilation of certain pronominal features by the R-expression, in the sense proposed by Lopes (2003). We assume that within a community of practice (LAVE and WENGER, 1991; ECKERT and McCONNELL-GINET, 2003), the speakers can share specific grammatical features. Thus, depending on the degree of definiteness/referenciality of the referent, *a bicha* may behave as a pronoun, referring to 1st and 2nd persons, obeying the hierarchy proposed above.

a) *A gente* showed a gain of interpretable features throughout its pronominalization process;
b) There is a hierarchy of such features in the interpretation of *a gente* in Brazilian Portuguese, from a maximally referential interpretation to a minimal referential interpretation;
c) *A bicha* shows a similar behavior synchronically.

Therefore, now I would like to show how these patterns can be read syntactically in the language. To do so, I assume with Gruber (2013) that *person* as a category is composed by the interaction of at least three essential features (parameters for Gruber): *person, location*, and *time.*
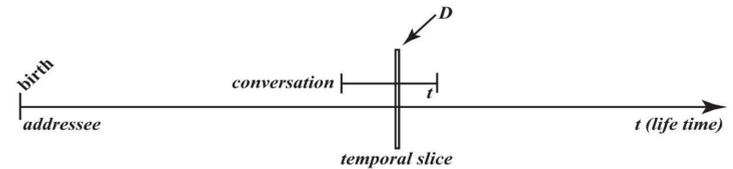

Fig. 1: Definiteness/referentiality hierarchy

Therefore, I assume with Gruber (2008, 2013) that D carries a feature that is valued by utterance time.

(9)

So, *a bicha*$_{1sg\backslash2sg}$ would have the following configuration in BP:

(10)

Thus, the designation for *person* depends on the spatiotemporal relation denoted by the syntactic structure. Pro-SIT determines the deictic relation of the referential element and carries the features which define its interpretation ([[Speaker] and [Addressee], in our proposal). Pro-Sit, thus, codifies the features of the geometry (HARLEY and RITTER, 2002).

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