



# Urban youth in Rio de Janeiro

## Contemporary linguistic variation in Brazilian Portuguese



Christiani P. Thompson & Sky Onosson



### Introduction

Our poster reports on an ongoing project investigating linguistic (speech) variation among public school students in Rio de Janeiro (2015 metro pop. 12,280,702), attended mostly by children from lower socioeconomic status households.

For the initial stage, we have focused on the creation of the first corpus of spontaneous speech from students on the island-district of Ilha do Governador. 102 students (32 male, 70 female) between the ages 11-16 from two schools on the island took part in Labovian sociolinguistic interviews in 2015 & 2016.

We hope that our project can help illuminate some of the unique linguistic characteristics of this speech community, which is not generally given much social prestige within the wider Brazilian Portuguese community.

### Selected Features of Interest

#### 1. Discourse marker: *tipo (assim) 'like'*

Our data documents the usage and development of discourse marker *tipo (assim)* 'like', from *tipo* (n) 'type, kind, sort' + *assim* (adv) 'so, like this, thus', first documented by Bittencourt (1999). Tokens are classified according to discourse function (Brinton 2008). Bittencourt identifies all of Brinton's functions for *tipo (assim)* except *quotative* (which is rare but does occur in our data), and adds *self-correction*:

**Function I: Elaborating/commenting on preceding utterance**, n=77 (49%); N=158

*Eu que tava errada, tipo, ele tava no lugar dele.*

I was the one who was wrong, **like**, he was sitting on his spot. [Speaker ID #145]

**Function II: Indicating new information**, n=31 (20%)

*Aí a única pessoas que, tipo, eu preservei a amizade até agora foi a Julia e a Ana.* [215]  
Then the only people who, **like**, I have stayed friends with so far are Julia and Ana.

**Function III: Self-correction**, n=28 (18%) (Bittencourt 1999)

*Eu falo com todo, todo, tipo, eu falo com quase todas as turmas menos com a minha.*  
I talk to all, all, **like**, I talk to almost all classes except mine. [215]

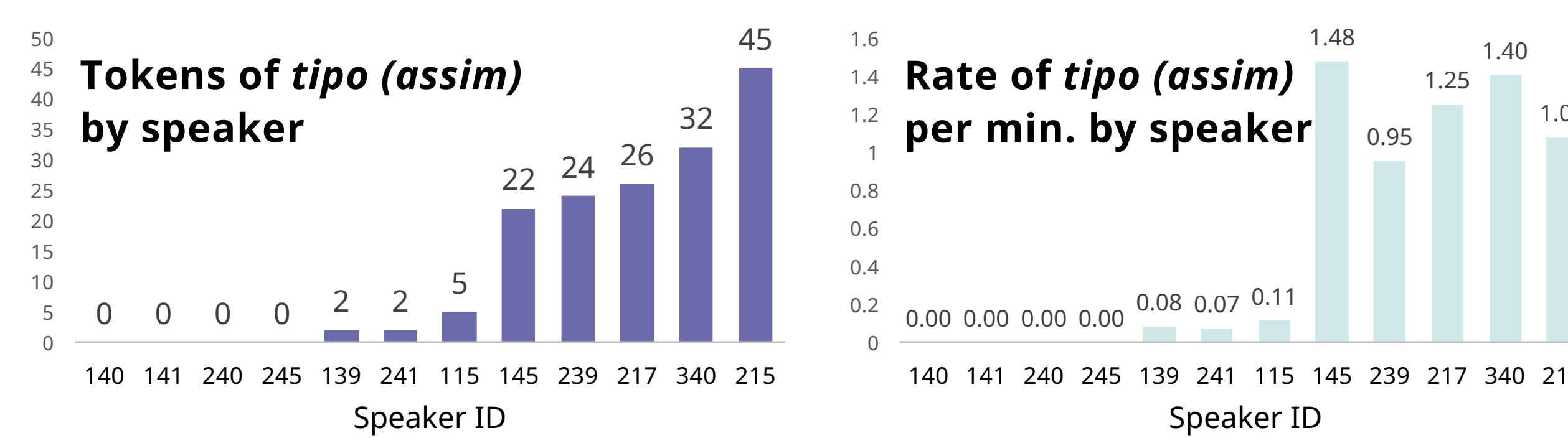
**Function IV: Turn-taking**, n=13 (8%) (Brinton 2008)

*Tipo, todos os meus irmãos são mais velhos. Like, all my brothers are older.* [215]

**Function V: Quotative**, n=4 (3%); see Section 2 for more on quotatives

*E ela ficou tipo, "O que você tá fazendo?"* And she was **like**, "what are you doing?" [115]

- 88% of tokens occur as *tipo* [tʃipu], only 12% as *tipo assim* [tʃipaʃi]
- Usage is idiosyncratic; 94% of tokens are produced by just 5 of 12 speakers:



#### 2. Quotatives

N=108 instances of quotative constructions occur in our transcribed data. There are four observed patterns which follow Cameron (1998), with one addition (Type III). Each pattern is reported here as a percentage of the total of all quotative occurrences (Buchstaller 2006).

**Type I: Direct reported speech.** The subject and a verb of speech precede the quotation. This type constitutes 34% of quotatives. Of the six speech verbs which occur, *falar* 'speak, talk' accounts for the vast majority of tokens, at 81%.

*E eu falei, Mãe, cadê o Max?"* And I said, "Mom, where's Max?" [215]

**Type II: "Bare noun phrase"** (Cameron 1998). A noun phrase (pronoun or full NP) without a verb precedes the quotation. Cameron describes a very similar pattern for Puerto Rican Spanish, although it is unknown how widespread this pattern is in other varieties of Spanish. This type constitutes the majority of quotatives in our data, at 44%.

*Ela, "Calma."* She, "Calm down." [115]

**Type III: Scene-setting.** A sentence or clause precedes the quotation but does not directly indicate the speaker or include a speech verb, typically serving instead to set the scene in some way. This type is the least common, constituting 9% of quotatives.

*Cheguei em casa, "Mãe, cadê o Max?"* (I) got home, "Mom, where's Max?" [215]

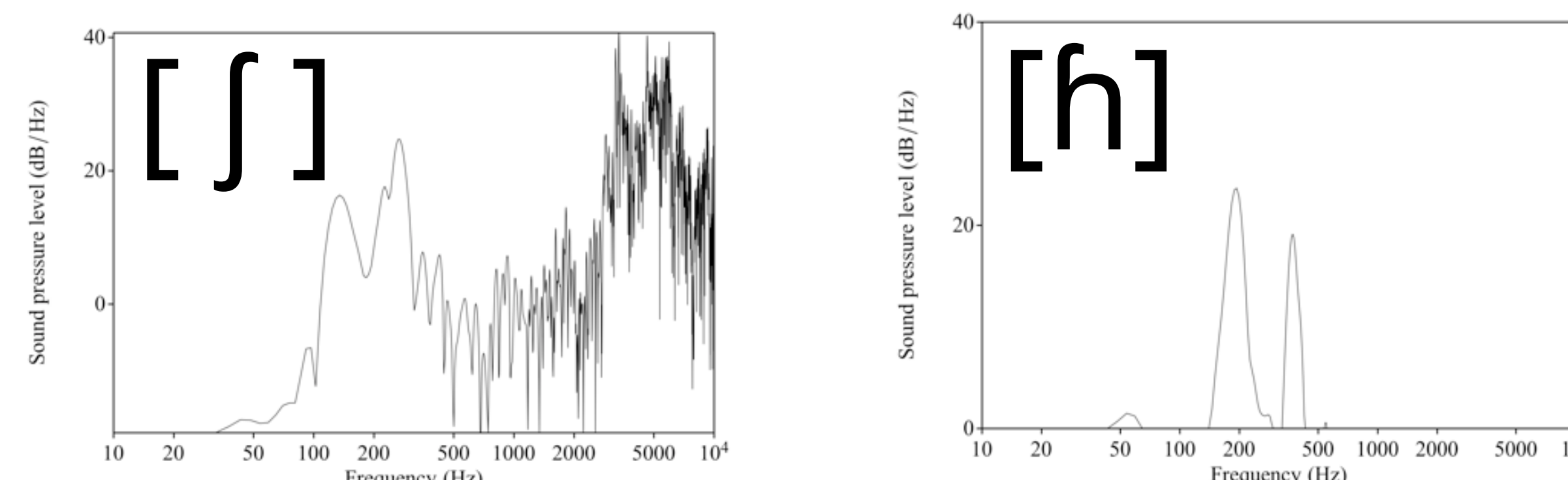
**Type IV: "Freestanding"** (Clark & Gerrig 1990). The quoted speech is part of a sequence of uninterrupted consecutive quotations, absent any introduction. This type is relatively infrequent, constituting 12% of quotatives in our data.

#### 3. Coda lenition (debuccalization)

Carioca (Rio demonym) speech is well-known for "chiado", a process of backing/palatalization of coronal coda fricatives, e.g. /s/ > [ʃ], and affrication of plosives, e.g. /t/ > [tʃ]. Carioca speech is also known for wide variation in the phonetic quality of /r/ which includes both backed and debuccalized (non-oral) varieties, e.g. [r,χ,ʁ,h,h].

Our data documents instances of both backing and debuccalization of coronal coda fricatives /s,z,ʃ,z/ which can occur as [χ,ʁ,h,h], e.g. *mesmo* 'same' /mesmu/ > [mehmu]. Barbosa & Albano (2004) describe archiphonemes /S/ and /R/ which respectively cover these realizations, but this relationship has not been described previously to the best of our knowledge.

A spectral slice comparison of the fricative portion of tokens of *mesmo* [mɛʃmu] (left) vs. [mehmu] (right) (speaker 145) reveal strong acoustic differences between the two variants; the debuccalized version is devoid of upper frequency information.



### Future Directions

Future work in our corpus will run in two main directions – further data analysis, and the collection of additional data.

**Analysis:** The primary task ahead of us is the transcription of more data. At present, interviews with 12 female subjects have been transcribed. Once we have transcribed the full corpus of female and male speakers, we will aim to investigate the role of such factors as speaker sex, socioeconomic status (on the basis of parental employment information) and geographic location (children who live in similar or different neighbourhoods). Additionally, all transcripts at present are from the population at just one of the two schools where we collected data. Inclusion of transcripts from the second school will permit us to further investigate differences in usage which may be associated with the different social environments at each school.

**Data collection:** A third trip is targeted for some time in 2017 to gather more data from another school (to be determined). Because of the wide-access approval we have been granted by the Department of Education, we are considering including a population from an area of Rio de Janeiro beyond Ilha do Governador. Expansion of the study population in this way would allow us to compare the use of features between the regions. Socioeconomic status varies widely in the larger Rio metropolitan area, so we may try to target a school which differs significantly in this respect from our current interviewees.

### Acknowledgements

This study was designed and carried out under the supervision of Dr. Alexandra D'Arcy, University of Victoria, whom we wish to thank for her valuable feedback and advice.

Our data was collected under the approval of the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board, Protocol #15-209, and the Municipal Secretary of Education for the Prefecture of the City of Rio de Janeiro, Protocol #07/004.640/2015.

We are extremely grateful to the City of Rio de Janeiro for granting us permission to carry out this study, and the students and staff at *Escola Municipal Jornalista Orlando Dantas* and *Ginásio Experimental Olímpico Nelson Prudência* for their participation.

We hope that our research contributes positively towards the community who graciously allowed us access, and that our work reflects well on their openness and kindness.

We are open to any comments, suggestions, or other feedback from the sociolinguistic community.

Contact us at:

[estudos.sociolinguisticos@gmail.com](mailto:estudos.sociolinguisticos@gmail.com)



Rio de Janeiro



Brasil

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### Geographic & Social Context

Rio de Janeiro is the former capital of Brazil, its 2nd largest municipal centre, and home of the largest school district in Latin America (pop. 654,454). Our study currently focuses on middle-school students at two public schools on Ilha do Governador ("Governor's Island", pop. ~400,000), which has restricted connections with the mainland.



The primary data source (75% of all interviewees, and the six currently transcribed interviews) is a newly-built (2015) athletics-focused school; students must compete for entrance and maintain high performance levels & grades. Part of a special government project, the school has many athletics-focused facilities including training/exercise rooms and outbuildings, and an outdoor pool.

The second school is a typical public school which lacks any special amenities or resources. Despite these differences, the children at both schools, which are only 5 km distance from each other, come from similar or identical neighbourhoods.

### Research Context

Here we briefly summarize the demographics and data types of two public corpora covering Rio de Janeiro. Our corpus aims to contribute to research on this speech community.

**NURC** (Projeto da Norma Urbana Oral Culta do Rio de Janeiro)

**Era of data collection:** 1970s, 1990s

**Participants:** 152 educated adults (1970s)

In the 1990s additional participants were added and the original participants were re-interviewed.

**PEUL** (Programa de Estudos sobre o Uso da Língua)

**Era of data collection:** 1980s, 1999-2000, 2000-2004

**Participants:** 96 speakers, ages 7 to 50+

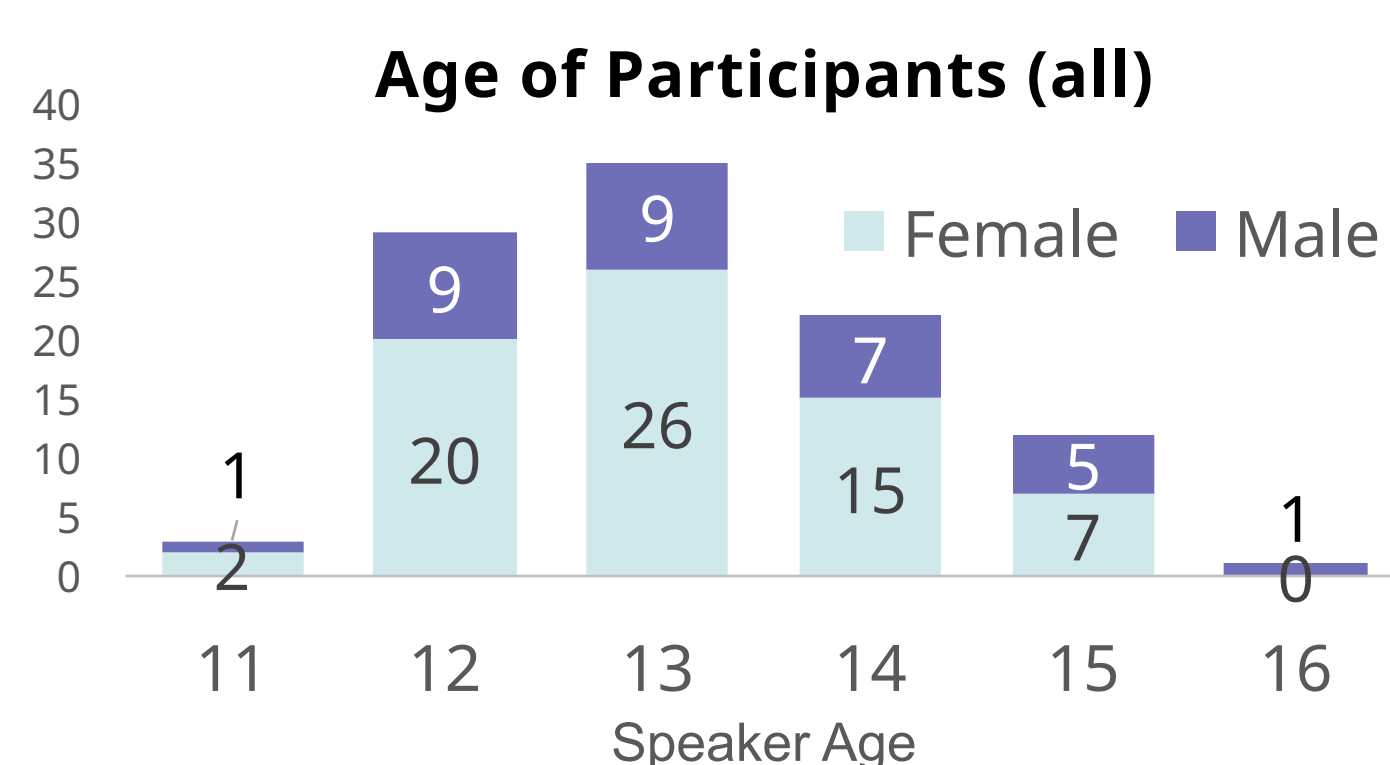
Oral interviews were conducted in first two periods; newspaper text data was added covering 2000-2004.

### Study Participants

Students and staff at both schools were very receptive to our study, leading to high recruitment rates; of the students who we were introduced to at the two schools, 33% & 57% (respectively) participated.

**Participants:** Interviews were conducted in pairs (or as triads in a few cases); subjects self-selected their interview partners, allowing natural and spontaneous conversation to emerge. The PI/interviewer (poster author #1) is a native of Ilha do Governador, further facilitating naturalness of speech.

**Data:** Both video and audio data were captured. The full corpus comprises 46 interviews which range between 45-60 minutes in length, a total of approximately 40 hours of data. 6 full interviews have been transcribed to date, documenting the speech of 12 female subjects ages 12-14.



School courtyard



A typical recording session