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PILOT STUDY

RUSSIAN IMMIGRANTS IN BRAZIL: TO UNDERSTAND, TO BE UNDERSTOOD

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ABSTRACT

While L2 acquisition by Brazilians has been studied for different languages, the acquisition of Brazilian Portuguese by foreigners has been poorly explored. Recent studies of non-native accented speech in other languages have shown that a foreign accent could largely influence the perception of personal qualities of speakers, and this issue

presents a large interest for intercultural research projects. Our research project is focused on Russophone immigrants living in Brazil, bilingual speakers of Russian and Portuguese. The specific aim of the current work is to describe a database containing information about 40 native Russian speakers living in São Paulo for at least six months. Their linguistic and sociocultural profiles are presented, and the experimental protocol of the data collection is described. The protocol included recording speech samples in Russian and in Portuguese and video recordings for further facial expression analysis of bilinguals by the program FaceReader 7.0. The analysis of the sociocultural profiles of the Russophones, presented in the current work, provides a strong basis for the enrichment of the phonetic, sociolinguistic, and nonverbal behavior analysis of these speakers.

RESUMO

A aquisição de L2 por brasileiros tem sido foco de um grande número de estudos. No entanto, a aquisição de português brasileiro por falantes de outras línguas tem sido pouco explorada. Pesquisas recentes sobre o sotaque estrangeiro mostram que este pode exercer forte influência na percepção de características pessoais de falantes, fator este que se reveste de grande interesse em projetos de pesquisa de natureza intercultural. O nosso projeto de pesquisa tem como foco imigrantes russófonos que moram no Brasil, falantes bilíngues de russo e português. O objetivo específico deste trabalho é descrever um banco de dados que contém informação sobre 40 falantes nativos de russo que moram em São Paulo há pelo menos 6 meses. Descrevemos seus perfis linguísticos e socioculturais, e apresentamos o protocolo de coleta de dados desenvolvido. O protocolo inclui a gravação de amostras de fala em russo e em português, e também a gravação em vídeo para futura análise de expressões faciais em bilingues, utilizando o programa FaceReader 7.0. A análise de perfis socioculturais de russófonos, apresentada no presente trabalho, fornece subsídios para enriquecer as análises fonéticas, sociolinguísticas e de comportamento não-verbal desses falantes.

KEYWORDS
Russian Accent; Brazilian Portuguese as L2; Bilingualism; Sociophonetics.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE
Sotaque Russo; Português Brasileiro como L2; Bilinguismo; Sociofonética.

INTRODUCTION

The globalization era fosters international migration and offers new opportunities for searching jobs and creating families. In 2015, international migrants represented 3.3 per cent of the global population, being 244 million people (apud IOM 2017, p. 2). At over 10 million emigrants in 2015, the Russian Federation had the third largest population of its citizens living abroad in the world after India and Mexico (IOM 2017, p. 19, p. 68). The former Soviet Republics, such as Ukraine (7th position by the number of emigrants), Kazakhstan (13th position), and Uzbekistan, also represent an important source of migrants in Europe (IOM 2017, p. 19, p. 70).

Russian immigration to Brazil has a long history, reflecting great social and political changes of the Russian State in the 20th century. The two last decades of the 19th century with its russification politics of the Imperial Government brought a considerable flow of the ethnic (Russian Germans and Jews) and religious (Mennonites, Baptists, Old Believers, etc) minorities to North and South America. About 20,000 citizens of the Russian Empire immigrated to Brazil from 1860 to 1912, settling down mainly in the southern states (ZABOLOTSKY, 2007, p. 23). After the Bolshevik Revolution, Brazil became a destination for the asylum seekers, such as civil war refugees, ex-soldiers of the White Army, political refugees, as well as Russified minorities of Romania (Bessarabian peasants) and Baltic countries. From 1921 to 1938, about 40,000 Russian immigrants were living in Brazil (RUSEISHVILI, 2016). After World War II, Brazil admitted 43,000 displaced persons (DPs) from Europe and refugees from the Far East, among which 5,000 ex-Russian and Soviet citizens who became stateless during the war (RUSEISHVILI, 2018).

Today Russians are among 15 nationalities who get the greater number of work permits in Brazil (QUINTINO; TONHATI, 2017). During the last 15 years, the Federal Police registered about 1500 Russians in the state of São Paulo (BAENINGER; FERNANDES, 2017). However, this number does not cover native Russian speakers from the former Soviet Republics and those in irregular migration.

About 350,000 of international migrants moved to the state of São Paulo in the period 2000-2015, about 900,000 for the whole country (BAENINGER; FERNANDES, 2017). However, until recently the field of teaching Portuguese as a Foreign Language has not drawn significant attention in Brazil. FARNEDA (2019) reports that currently just four Brazilian universities offer an undergraduate course for language instructors in Portuguese as a Foreign Language, two out of them opened in 2015. Many authors who describe their experience of teaching Brazilian Portuguese to foreigners mention that even the extension courses of Portuguese as a Foreign Language in public Brazilian universities are mostly given by volunteers, mainly teachers of other foreign languages, and access to the didactic materials is quite limited (AMADO, 2013; CAMARGO, 2009; FARNEDA, 2019; FURTOSO,

2009; LOPEZ, 2016; MIRANDA; LOPEZ, 2019). Certificate of Proficiency in Portuguese for Foreigners (*Certificado de Proficiência em Língua Portuguesa para Estrangeiros, CELPE-Bras*) became mandatory for applying for Brazilian citizenship only in 2018 (BRASIL, 2018). In these conditions, it is not surprising that the research field of the acquisition of Brazilian Portuguese as a Foreign Language also has been poorly explored, even though L2 acquisition by Brazilians is being actively studied for different languages (DINIZ DE FIGUEIREDO, 2018; SANT'ANNA, 2008).

A number of reports describe the phonetic difficulties of foreigners learning Brazilian Portuguese, mainly native Spanish or English speakers, based on the classroom experience or observing a small number of students from one institution. They point out the difficulties in discriminating open and close mid vowels (FEIDEN; ALVES; FINGER, 2014; GUIMARÃES, 2011), devoicing, velarization and palatalization of consonants (CAMARGO, 2009), and wrong nasalization (CAMARGO, 2009; GUIMARÃES, 2011). Another branch of research investigates the language contact between Brazilian Portuguese and minority languages spoken by descendants of old immigration waves such as Polish (COSTA; LOREGIAN-PENKAL, 2015; MILESKI, 2017), Riograndenser Hunsrückisch German (GEWEHR-BORELLA; ZIMMER; ALVES, 2011), Ukrainian (COSTA; LOREGIAN-PENKAL, 2015) and Venetian (BENINCÁ, 2018). However, very few reports focus on studying Brazilian Portuguese spoken by the first generation of immigrants who move to Brazil being adults and frequently do not have access to formal instruction in Brazilian Portuguese. The research group of Alves investigates the vowel system of late Spanish-Portuguese bilinguals who live in Southern Brazil, but they focus on the interaction of two language systems and do not go into the details of the sociolinguistic aspects (AZEVEDO; MATZENAUER; ALVES, 2013; PEREYRON; ALVES, 2019).

The international research community is investing huge efforts in foreign accent studies. Among the factors affecting native speech productions, the kind of input is highlighted in the Speech Learning Model (SLM) developed by FLEGE (1995, 2007). According to the SLM, speech sound perception is understood as the detection of acoustic properties which are specified as phonetic categories in long term memory representations. Flege (1995, 2007) also proposes that in L2, speech sound perception is not considered as based on the equivalences among phonemic inventories, but on the phonetic realizations of the speech sounds in specific contexts. Furthermore, the perception of sound contrasts in L2 varies as a ratio of the degree of linguistic experience; speech sound production errors are considered as mainly related to the lack of perceptual phonetic goal formation. Some of the SLM claims are: the language systems of a bilingual share a common phonological space in the speaker's mind; the phenomenon of phonetic assimilation could cause two L2 sounds to be interpreted and pronounced as one

neighboring sound in L1. The production of a native-like L2 sound depends on the establishment of a new phonetic category for this sound.

In addition to the quality and quantity of input in L2, another important factor considered by the SLM is the amount of L1 use: even early bilinguals could produce L2 sounds less native-like if they continue using the L1 frequently (FLEGE, 2007; MORA; KEIDEL; FLEGE, 2015). Thus, the age of L2 learning, length of residence, access to formal instruction and motivation are considered to be secondary factors that could influence the two previously mentioned factors (MOYER, 2008; PISKE; MACKAY; FLEGE, 2001). Other factors related to learning abilities, such as musical and mimicry ones, have also been investigated (FLEGE, 1995; PISKE; MACKAY; FLEGE, 2001); even a possible relation between learner personality type (extroversion/introversion) and success in language learning has been considered (KAYAOGLU, 2013; ÖZBAY; AYDEMIR; ATASOY, 2017).

Recent studies on non-native accented speech have shown that a foreign accent could largely influence the perception of the speakers' personal qualities, such as intelligence, professionalism, empathy, and credibility (FUSE; NAVICHKOVA; ALLOGGIO, 2018; HUANG, 2013; LEV-ARI; KEYSAR, 2010; RUSSO; ISLAM; KOYUNCU, 2017). Thus, the sociologically-based analysis of foreign accent shifts the focus from the way we speak to the effects that "sounding foreign" produces on the listeners and what kind of attitudes it provokes on them (MOYER, 2013, p. 102). This brings us to the issue of human rights: the prejudice towards accented speech has been studied in the contexts of hiring decisions, employment and tenancy situations, harassment, and ridicule (MUNRO, 2003). Interestingly, a "nonverbal accent" could appear in facial expressions of emotions, and this also affects judgments about foreigners (CHUNG; ROBINS, 2015; HUANG *et al.*, 2001; MARSH; ELFENBEIN; AMBADY, 2003); the communicative role of facial expressions in human interactions is also relevant to be considered. In Brazil, the sociolinguistic aspects related to speech accents concern mainly on regional dialects (OUSHIRO, 2017; OUSHIRO; PARAFITA-COUTO, 2017).

Our research project is focused on Russophone immigrants living in São Paulo. The major aims of our research project are: (1) characterizing the production of Brazilian Portuguese sounds by native Russian speakers living in Brazil; (2) studying the perception of Russian-accented speaker characteristics by native Brazilian speakers; (3) describing the facial expression patterns in late Russian-Portuguese bilinguals and tracing their perception by monolinguals; (4) describing the impact of being a native Russian speaker on the immigrant adaptation in São Paulo through interviews and autoethnography studies.

The specific aim of the current work is to describe the database of native Russian speakers living in São Paulo interested in taking part in the phonetics and sociolinguistics research. We intend to describe their linguistic and sociocultural profiles through an especially developed questionnaire and collect experimental data, using audio and video recordings for the next step analysis. The questionnaire includes general questions,

commonly asked in the studies of sociolinguistic identification of late bilinguals (age, time of residence in the country, self-assessment in speaking and comprehension ability in L2, frequency of using L1 and L2, list of known languages, as described by LI; SEPANSKI; ZHAO, 2006), some specific questions about pronunciation difficulties in Brazilian Portuguese and to what extent the foreign accent interferes with their normal life. The protocol for audio recording was elaborated based on the preliminary results obtained by a group of Audiology students who performed a perceptual analysis of homemade audio recordings received from 29 Russophone immigrants (VITORIANO DE ALMEIDA *et al.*, 2018). They pointed out three main difficulties: (1) no distinction between open and close mid vowels; (2) devoicing of voiced consonants; (3) misproduction of nasalization features. The protocol for video recording was developed to study the phenomenon of "nonverbal accent" (CHUNG; ROBINS, 2015; HUANG *et al.*, 2001; MARSH; ELFENBEIN; AMBADY, 2003) in the Russophone population of São Paulo using an automated system for facial expression recognition (UYL; KUILENBURG, 2005; LOIJENS *et al.*, 2015; MADUREIRA; FONTES, 2019).

1. MATERIAL AND METHODS

1.1. PARTICIPANT RECRUITING

The participants were recruited by personal contact at the events related to Russian culture available in São Paulo and through social networks. The initial research subject cohort was presented by 58 native Russian speakers leaving in São Paulo for at least six months. Forty participants filled a detailed questionnaire and confirmed to be available for audio and video recording in laboratory conditions. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (CAAE 09079219.9.0000.5482). All the participants signed informed consents.

1.2. QUESTIONNAIRE DESCRIPTION

The questionnaire was divided into six parts.

Part 1
"Personal data" included questions about personal information: name; sex; place and date of birth; education; nationality; nationality of the parents and languages spoken in the home of parents; the age of children (when applicable) and which language they hear at home; complaints about the impaired hearing or speech.

Part 2
"The migrant trajectory" included questions about the time of residence in Brazil; age of arriving; reasons for emigration, and cities in which the participant had lived for more than six months.

Part 3

"Current contact with Russian language" included questions about the frequency of visits to Russia or Russian-speaking cities; the frequency of speaking Russian in São Paulo with other Russian speakers in face-to-face-interactions; the frequency of using Russian to communicate with other Russian speakers through online contact and messengers; the frequency of seeing Russian films and listening to Russian music; any other type of activity involving the use of the Russian language; some special features of pronunciation in Russian, individual or regional.

Part 4

"Self-evaluation of the proficiency level in Portuguese and exposure to Portuguese language" included self-evaluation questions about speech performance in Portuguese; listening comprehension ability in Portuguese; having a Brazilian member of the family and hearing Portuguese at home; having a Brazilian friend with whom they speak frequently; the way of learning Portuguese before moving to Brazil and afterwards; courses and activities involving the use of Portuguese; having a job in a Brazilian company or one involving interactions with Brazilians; feelings towards Brazilian culture and language.

Part 5

"General linguistic evaluation" included questions about other spoken languages and the level of proficiency; the personal impression about how easy they learn new languages; the preferred way to study languages.

Part 6

"Phonetic difficulties" included questions about the self-evaluation of how strong their accent in Brazilian Portuguese is; to what extent the foreign accent interferes with the normal life; types of phonetic difficulties (closed and open questions); if they have ever tried to search for professional help to improve pronunciation; if they would accept this type of help; why they agreed to take part in our study. A complementary part included questions about self-evaluation as introvert/extrovert and the experience of learning or performing music.

The questionnaire was prepared in two identical versions, in Russian and in Portuguese. All the participants received both versions and were instructed to fill the one they feel more comfortable with. The questionnaires in Russian were later translated into Portuguese by Dr. Smirnova Henriques to make them available for the other researchers of the group. All the answers were transferred to an Excel spreadsheet to simplify data analysis; the information about the original language of the questionnaire was kept. The mean values and standard deviations (SD) were calculated for all the parameters.

1.3. RECORDING PROCEDURES

Before filling the questionnaire, the participants were informed about the next steps of the original research protocol carefully prepared by us. The protocol includes (1) audio and (2) video recording and lasts about two hours. The speech samples were recorded in a sound-isolated cabin, in Portuguese and afterwards in Russian, including the following tasks: (1.1) a semi-spontaneous speech about a home city; (1.2) reading the fairy tale "Little

Red Riding Hood"; (1.3) reading three repetitions of 57 Portuguese words whose selection was based on the preliminary results obtained by VITORIANO DE ALMEIDA *et al.* (2018), inserted in a carrier sentence "*Diga_____ baixinho*" ("Say_____in a soft way") as described by MADUREIRA, BARZAGHI-FICKER, MENDES (2002), and three repetitions of phonetically similar 49 Russian words, inserted in the same carrier sentence in Russian; (1.4) the emotional reading of a sequence composed of 17 phrases/small dialogs elaborated by the research group of Dr. Skrelin from Saint Petersburg State University (KACHKOVSKAIA *et al.*, accepted) to elicit basic intonation patterns in Russian (SKRELIN; VOLSKAYA, 2009), and translated by us into Portuguese to be recorded in both languages. Two types of tasks were recorded on video for further facial expression analysis by the program FaceReader 7.0 (UYL; KUILENBURG, 2005; LOIJENS *et al.*, 2015; MADUREIRA; FONTES, 2019), in Portuguese and afterwards in Russian: (2.1) an interview about the personal life, immigration experience and political views to observe emotions in semi-spontaneous speech; (2.2) ten tasks eliciting attitudes related to seven basic facial expressions: neutral, happy, sad, angry, surprised, scared, disgusted. The tasks were formulated by a request to react in a certain situation.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. THE GENERAL DATABASE DESCRIPTION

Within the group of 40 native Russian speakers, 18 chose to fill the questionnaire in Russian and 17 in Portuguese. Three participants filled both versions of the questionnaire in spite of being instructed that it would not be necessary. Two participants provided the requested information orally only. Ten participants were men and 30 women. This gender imbalance could be explained by the fact that many Russian women came to Brazil to marry or together with a husband and have more free time available. All the participants were native speakers of Russian fluent in Portuguese at least at the level of the common knowledge themes.

2.2. NATIONALITY AND THE PLACE OF BIRTH

Concerning their nationalities, 35 defined their nationality as Russian, 3 as Ukrainian, 1 as Belarusian, and 1 as a Tatar. Asked about the place of birth, 28 said they were born in Russia and 9 in the former Soviet Republics: three in Ukraine, two in Belarus, two in Moldova, one in Georgia, and one in Tajikistan. Two participants were born in Germany and one did not provide information. Within the group of participants born in Russia, seven were born in Moscow, five in Saint Petersburg, two in Murmansk, and two in Tomsk; the others were from different cities located throughout Russia (Angarsk, Elektrostal, Izhevsk, Zhukovsky,

Kemerovo, Khabarovsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Salekhard, Staraya Kupavna, Syktyvkar and even a small settlement in the Mari El Republic named Mari-Turek).

2.3. EDUCATION LEVEL AND DOMAIN

Asked about their highest education level, 20 participants reported to have a bachelor (four years) or a specialist (a five-year program common in Russia) degree; one was a master student, seven obtained master's degree, two were PhD students and six obtained a PhD degree. Only four participants did not complete an undergraduate program. Russia has a high percentage of adults who have a university degree, estimated in 2017 as 30.2% (BORODINA *et al.*, 2017). The much higher presence of people with a university degree in our database is explained by the fact that this education profile gives more opportunities for traveling abroad and migration. In addition, they are expected to have more access to the Internet and to be more conscientious about the importance of participation in scientific research. These 36 participants with a university degree were from very different areas. Six specialized in Philology (two in Russian language, two in Indigenous languages, one in Japanese, and one in German); they are of special interest for us because we could verify if the special knowledge of Philology helps to improve the pronunciation for the language not studied at the university (only one person had a course of European Portuguese). The domains represented by three participants were Economy, Engineering, International Relations, Law and Physics; two - Accounting, Pharmaceutics, Sociology and Tourism Industry; the domains of Biology, Computational Science, Choreography, Mathematics, Music, Political Science, and Psychology were represented by only one participant each.

2.4. MIGRATION TO BRAZIL

When asked about reasons to move to Brazil, 18 mentioned studies or job (within them ten women, 56% within this category, and eight men, 44%) and 22 mentioned family reasons (20 women, 91% within this category, and two men, 9%). Fourteen said they had children living with them in Brazil and four had children living in another country. The percentage of working people in the group of participants is 73%.

The mean age of arriving in Brazil was 27 years (*SD* = 5.9 years), varying from 18 to 47 years; the mean time of residence was 5 years (*SD* = 4 years), varying from six months to 20 years. Surprisingly, only 10 from 40 participants had lived in other countries before for more than six months, the most part had Brazil as a first and principal destination of residence. Asked about the frequency of visiting Russia/a Russophone city in another country, 42% told they went rarely, 30% every year, and 28% sometimes.

2.5. USE OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN BRAZIL

As for the use of Russian language in Brazil, 30% said they spoke Russian with other Russian native speakers in face-to-face interaction all the days, 27.5% almost every day, 27.5% rarely and 15% sometimes. When using phone/Skype/other voice services, 32.5% said they spoke Russian every day, 37.5% almost every day, 17.5% sometimes, and 12.5% rarely. When asked about watching Russian films and hearing Russian music, 32% said they did it sometimes, 26% rarely, 26% almost every day, and 16% every day. About 79% mentioned the use of Russian in other activities, mainly teaching courses of Russian (even having other principal activities, 20% of all the participants do that) and reading news, books, and interacting in social networks (28%).

2.6. USE OF BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE: SELF-EVALUATION, EXPOSURE, AND WAYS OF LEARNING

In relation to the self-evaluation of their own speech in Brazilian Portuguese, we asked to follow the scale from 0 (very bad) to 10 (excellent) and the mean was 7 (SD = 1.9); the mean of the self-evaluation of the listening comprehension ability was 8 (SD = 1.5). Furthermore, 63% of the participants confirmed that they have Brazilian family members and speak Portuguese at home, 37% don´t. In addition, 63% have close Brazilian friends and speak to them frequently.

In order to investigate if the amount of exposition to Brazilian Portuguese was a significant factor characterizing the participant´s background, we have applied a Spearman rank correlation coefficient. Surprisingly, there was no correlation between the conditions related to having a Brazilian family and Brazilian friends (Spearman coefficient r = -0.06, p = 0.7). Considering the 37 participants who provided the full information, 11% have no Brazilian family and no close friends, 27% do not have Brazilian family but have close friends, 22% have a Brazilian family member but no close friends, and 41% have them both. In relation to the personality type, 72% considered to be introverts, and 28% extroverts; 67% play some musical instrument or sing.

Another surprising fact is that only 38% of the native Russian speakers in our study began to learn Portuguese before moving to Brazil. These 38% are represented by 15 participants, within them 9 relied on self-study. In fact, in Russia, courses of Brazilian Portuguese are offered mainly in the Brazilian Cultural Centers of Moscow and Saint Petersburg (230 students in 2017 all together) (AREFIEV, 2019), and by few language schools and private teachers. Undergraduate courses in European Portuguese are offered in nine Russian universities, but only 15,000 people in Russia are currently expected to be proficient in Portuguese (AREFIEV, 2019). Language instructors in Portugal report a large influx of

immigrants from Eastern Europe, many of them native Russian speakers, also without knowledge of Portuguese (HEAD; SEMENOVA-HEAD, 2010).

Answering the question about the preferred way to study languages, 57% of the participants chose the option "living in the country and communicating with native speakers"; 19% chose self-study at home. Only 25% of the participants, 10 persons, attended some Portuguese courses after arriving in São Paulo. Two out of them mentioned the course for foreigners at the FFLCH-USP (*Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas da Universidade de São Paulo*) and the FAAP (*Fundação Armando Alvares Penteado*). One person who had already obtained a bachelor's degree in Russia studied in EJA (*Educação de Jovens e Adultos*) school just to improve Portuguese and to obtain a Brazilian diploma of secondary education.

Only 31 participants were asked if they like Brazilian culture and language because others had an old version of the questionnaire and did not update the data later. In this group, 48.4% answered "yes" and 48.4% answered "some aspects yes, some aspects no". Only one person chose the option "No, I don't ".

2.7. RUSSIAN ACCENT IN BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE: WHAT DO THE RUSSOPHONES SAY?

The aspect we were particularly interested in getting to know was the Russian participants' opinion about their foreign accent in Brazilian Portuguese. Answering a closed question about their pronunciation difficulties, 68% pointed difficulties in the production of some sounds, 61% in understanding how the sounds are produced, 32% in understanding Portuguese grammar, and 16% in using the correct intonation pattern. In relation to the self-evaluation of their accent in Brazilian Portuguese, we asked them to follow the scale from 0 (no accent) to 10 (very strong) and the mean was 5 (*SD* = 1.9). When asked to answer to what extent the foreign accent interferes with their everyday life, using the scale from 0 (does not interfere) to 10 (very strongly), the mean value of the evaluations was 1 (*SD* = 1.6); only 22% appointed values higher than 3. At the same time, 82% of the participants answered "yes" to the question if they would like to be helped to improve their pronunciation. This profile could be explained by a comment of one participant who wrote, "The accent does not interfere with my normal life, but makes me mad!" (coefficient of the accent interference in everyday life = 2).

When asked to answer an open question about the principal difficulties, 34% appointed the difficulty to differentiate open and close vowels giving examples as "*avó/ avô*" (the pair mentioned by 13% participants), 13% appointed the difficulty to produce nasal sounds giving examples as "*grau/grão*", two participants mentioned the difficulties in pronouncing r-like sounds correctly and two in using the correct intonation pattern. In relation to the intonation patterns, one participant wrote, "Sometimes I feel that my intonation seems to be strange

for Brazilians; it could give a negative, arrogant impression even though I don't have this intention" (coefficient of the accent interference in everyday life = 1). This indicates that even the research subjects who are aware of their pronunciation difficulties might need special instruction to improve their pronunciation.

Some participants wrote negative comments about their accent as "My accent always makes me feel a stranger, all the Brazilians tell me that I have a strong accent" (this was the only participant who assigned the coefficient of the accent interference in everyday life = 10); mentioned a bad feeling when "identified as a foreigner and asked immediately where I'm from" (coefficient of the accent interference in everyday life = 3) or when "forced to discuss Russian politics" (coefficient of the accent interference in everyday life = 3); when "Brazilians want to take advantage thinking that a foreigner does not know Brazilian reality" (coefficient of the accent interference in everyday life = 1). One participant wrote, "I'm always afraid to say something in the wrong way that makes Brazilians understand that I'm a foreigner" (coefficient of the accent interference in everyday life = 1).

However, other persons wrote, "All the people like my European accent" (coefficient of the accent interference in everyday life = 1) or even "My accent makes Brazilians think about me in a more positive way" (coefficient of the accent interference in everyday life = 0), "My accent makes Brazilians find me a more interesting person" (coefficient of the accent interference in everyday life = 1) and "To the contrary, sometimes the accent helps me to obtain better prices" (coefficient of the accent interference in everyday life = 0).

When answering the open questions, five persons mentioned that their accent gets worse when they speak with new acquaintances, two – when they speak by phone, others mentioned that their accents get worse when they are tired, nervous, or speak with a close person.

Based on these findings, we have concluded that different persons who chose the same low coefficient of the accent interference in everyday life, write comments about their accent with opposite views; there are immigrants who believe that the accent helps them to have advantages such as getting better prices and those who believe that their accent makes some Brazilians take advantage of them. There are no doubts that the respondents feel the weight of their foreign accent in their daily life, although we could not conclude in a simple way if it is positive or not. Focus group analysis and unstructured interviews can be used to investigate the perception by Russophones of their foreign accent in Brazilian Portuguese, as well as their practices to avoid or to reinforce the foreign accent's effects. These data also justify a more detailed sociolinguistic study of the perception of the Russian-accented speech by Brazilians.

3. PRELIMINARY EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS AND PERSPECTIVES

As next steps, we plan to analyze the data collected through the protocol described in section 1.3 and to relate them to the speaker's sociocultural profiles. We have recently reported some preliminary analyses of the data.

First, recordings of the semi-spontaneous speech of participants about their home city were used for the production of the perception test of the Russian-accented speech by Brazilians (SMIRNOVA HENRIQUES; RUSEISHVILI; MADUREIRA, 2019). We have shown that the perception of the voice pleasantness by Brazilians was strongly negatively correlated with the Russian accent degree, and this did not depend on their previous contact with the Russian language and culture (SMIRNOVA HENRIQUES; MADUREIRA, 2019a).

Secondly, recordings of four Brazilian Portuguese words in a carrier sentence from 15 participants were used for the characterization of the production by Russophones of the Brazilian Portuguese minimal pairs containing the phonemes /ɔ/ - /o/ and /ɛ/ - /e/; we concluded that the Russian speakers do not differentiate them at the production level at all (SMIRNOVA HENRIQUES; MADUREIRA, 2019b). The material of the recordings, using the carrier sentence, was also used to describe the devoicing of plosive sounds in a case study of one native Russian speaker born in Ukraine (SMIRNOVA HENRIQUES *et al.*, 2019). These recordings will be further used for a more detailed characterization of the Russian accent. In the near future, we will give priority to the study of mid vowel production and devoicing of plosive sounds.

Finally, the material recorded for the study of intonation patterns is being analyzed in Saint Petersburg State University to describe changes within the intonation system of Russian native speakers residing in São Paulo and exposed to Brazilian Portuguese for a long time (KACHKOVSKAIA *et al.*, accepted). The expert analysis revealed that some speakers, despite having spent much time in Brazil, still pronounce Brazilian Portuguese sentences using their native, Russian, intonation patterns; on the other hand, some speakers replace native intonation patterns in Russian by those used in Brazilian Portuguese.

In addition, we initiated first analyses of the facial expressions in Russian-Portuguese bilinguals to study the "nonverbal accent". Facial expressions are taken to be indexes of emotions and attitudes and are influenced not only by universal, but also by cultural factors. We aim to identify the patterns of facial expressions realized by the same subject when he/she speaks Russian or Brazilian Portuguese. In our first analysis, we compare the facial expressions related to the attitudes of demonstrating affection (speaking to an imaginary kitten or baby) and giving an order.

The analysis of the sociocultural profiles of the Russophones composing our database, presented in the current work, provides a strong basis for the enrichment of the phonetic, sociolinguistic, and nonverbal behavior analysis of these speakers, currently conducted by our group.

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