



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Contemporary uses of Pajubá, the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ dialect

Alves Vieira, E.; Burnett, S.; Vigo, F.

Citation

Alves Vieira, E. (2025). Contemporary uses of Pajubá, the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ dialect. In S. Burnett & F. Vigo (Eds.), *Battlefield linguistics* (pp. 113-132). De Gruyter Mouton.
doi:10.1515/9783111351568-006

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licensed under Article 25fa Copyright Act/Law \(Amendment Taverne\)](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4293591>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Eduardo Alves Vieira

Chapter 6

Contemporary uses of Pajubá, the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ dialect

1 Introduction

The publication of Bill Leap's canonical *Beyond the Lavender Lexicon* in 1995 heralded a shift away from poring over lists of "coded words with special meanings" (Leap 1995: xvii) and towards the broader sociocultural dynamics of queer language in use around the world. Nearly three decades later, Leap (2021) identified ongoing erasures within the field, arguing for a renewed commitment to African American/queer linguistics (Johnson 2001) and other intersectional themes and projects within the scope of queer linguistics (QL). It is in response to Leap's call that this chapter presents an analysis of the historically marginalised LGBTQIA+ dialect Pajubá, which stems from Candomblé, a marginalised Afro-Brazilian religion. QL emerged as a field of inquiry in Brazilian academia at the beginning of the 21st century (Borba 2015), and this late debut has delayed the study of this LGBTQIA+ dialect. So while research on some queer speech communities may have moved "beyond" the lavender lexicon, Pajubá is still understudied in the Brazilian context and has yet to occupy its place in the empirical foundations of (international) QL research.

In this chapter, I investigate how native Brazilian Portuguese (BP) speakers who identify as LGBTQIA+ perceive and use Pajubá, examining the language ideologies associated with this dialect. After presenting a review of relevant literature on Pajubá, I analyse the responses of 435 self-identified LGBTQIA+ survey participants to an online Qualtrics questionnaire designed to elicit attitudes towards the dialect. This analysis is part of a larger project that seeks to track the evolution and linguistic variation of BP¹. This work has contributed to two main conclusions: firstly, that Pajubá is no longer as stigmatised as when it was used to conceal the gender identities and sexual orientation of its speakers, and secondly, that it has become a dialect primarily used for the purposes of entertainment, creating a sense of belonging within the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ community. This chapter highlights sociolinguistic tensions that started during the colonisation of Brazil and have been perpetuated into the present day, showing that in a context of ideological, political,

1 The larger project titled *Is Portuguese becoming queer?*. In this work, I analyze factors influencing the use of Pajubá in BP, and how the dialect is involved in language variation.

cultural, and linguistic battle, Pajubá evolved from a secret, anti-language into a more prestigious register due to its trendiness and as a marker of resistance to political conservatism in modern Brazilian society.

2 Repressive linguistic ideologies, a kissing cousin of sociopolitical conservatism

Gal and Irvine (2019) argue that statements about language manifest ideological positions with far-reaching consequences in the material world, revealing how society perceives speakers of a language and how such ideologies work to naturalise or challenge power relations throughout history. Such statements are systematised in metadiscourses and regimes of value. These semiotic systematisations are named ideologies because they encode the local, historical, political, and moral interests of subjects and their projects.

Conservative groups in Brazil have traditionally positioned themselves against the use and development of Pajubá, evincing a repressive linguistic ideology. Although more formal settings have started to raise awareness about how Pajubá has enriched BP and become a national linguistic heritage, conservative social actors such as former president Jair Bolsonaro and his family have publicly opposed granting the dialect a higher social status. In 2018, a question in the *Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio* [ENEM², National High School Exam] about Pajubá, “the secret dialect of gays and *travestis*³” (Pati 2018) asked students to identify what gives Pajubá the status of a dialect that is part of Brazil’s linguistic heritage. Students did not need to know any Pajubá to answer this question. Instead, they had to choose one of the multiple-choice answers that explained how dictionaries and the standardisation of registers play a decisive role in standardising a dialect and including it in national linguistic heritage (Araújo 2022). Although ENEM’s question on Pajubá favoured nobody, Bolsonaro and members of his family claimed on social media that

² ENEM is a non-compulsory, standardized Brazilian national exam that high schoolers take to test their knowledge. It is designed and administered by the Ministry of Education’s National Institute for Educational Studies and Research.

³ *Travestis* are Brazilian trans individuals whose performance of a feminine gender produced in a male body makes their identities socially and linguistically malleable (Borba and Ostermann 2007: 132). In other words, *travesti* is a Brazilian non-normatively gendered community whose bodily transformations resemble those of trans women but whose discursive identity is built differently (Zimman 2018: 4). See the references mentioned here for more information about *travestis* and other trans identities in Brazil and elsewhere.

LGBTQIA+ students had an advantage in the exam – as if all LGBTQIA+ individuals were equally knowledgeable and fluent in their queer dialects. This one question in the *ENEM* prompted Bolsonaro to discredit the national exam in a live video, declaring that he would start checking *ENEM*'s later iterations to ensure no questions about “the particular language of those people” would be asked again (Pati 2018). In Bolsonaro's opinion, asking about Pajubá in a formal exam was one of the many ways to impose “those people's” (i.e. the LGBTQIA+ community's) “gender ideology”, his favourite shibboleth (Borba 2022). The 2018 conservative political wave that elected Bolsonaro contributed to *ENEM* making headlines (Araújo 2022) because conservatives disapproved of “the dialect of gays and *travestis*” in the exam, especially after the Bolsonaros spoke against it. The Bolsonaros' comments on Pajubá are a metadiscourse that intends to discredit not only the dialect but also its speakers, displaying a language ideology opposed to linguistic, sexual, and gender diversity.

The stigmatisation and prejudice against dissident sexualities, non-hegemonic gender identities, and their dialects can explain the dearth of studies about Pajubá and the late appearance of QL in Brazil, one of the most queerphobic countries in the world (Benevides 2023). According to a dossier compiled by the *Associação Nacional de Travestis e Transexuais do Brasil* [ANTRA, Brazilian National Association of Travestis and Transsexuals], at least 151 trans people were killed in the country in 2022, with the youngest of these victims being only 15 years old (Benevides 2023). ANTRA reported that Brazil placed first in the world as the country that killed the most trans people for the fourteenth year running. It was also the number one country consuming pornography on digital platforms featuring trans actors, suggesting a disturbing correlation between inhumane brutality and sexual desire. The cruelty to trans folks in the country also happens in other ways, such as violence against trans kids and teenagers with restricted or no access to school restrooms aligned with their gender identities. As Benevides (2023) explains, much of the transphobia in Brazil is under-reported because state policies hinder gathering data on crimes against LGBTQIA+ people in general, such as robbery with homicide and the murder of *travestis* and trans women. Furthermore, many police stations in the country are hostile environments to LGBTQIA+ folks, constraining these individuals from pressing charges against LGBTQIA+-phobic crimes while blaming the victims for the violence they suffer (Benevides 2023). Neglecting these victims' experiences and grievances compromises the gathering of data on cases of violence against the community. Additionally, many states in the country omit any information about the perpetrators while exposing the victims' birth names instead of their social/chosen names (Benevides 2023). As ANTRA has stated, the Brazilian epidemic of transphobia is enabled by what Benevides, echoing Achille Mbembe, calls the state's “necro-Trans-policy” – a political manoeuvre to evict (Black) trans/*travestis* lives from existence.

Gal and Irvine (2019: 3) argue that people often “allege that a language reflects something about its speakers’ character” – and similarly, that national languages reveal national character. When looking at the historical development of Pajubá, it becomes clear that since its emergence in the temples of Candomblé and its diffusion to other speech communities of BP (discussed below), the ideologies associated with the dialect reveal different layers of the Brazilian character marked by racial, religious, linguistic, sexual, and gendered ideologies of oppression. Gal and Irvine go on to clarify that ideologies are partial and incomplete, which in the case of Pajubá means that while certain groups align with repressive discourses against the dialect, others engage in counter-discourses that celebrate it since they depart from a different standpoint, such as that of Pajubá users themselves, and their more inclusive linguistic ideologies.

As the following sections will show, Pajubá developed from Yoruba, one of many languages spoken by oppressed and enslaved people during the Brazilian colonial period. Since its appearance, Pajubá has been subjugated by different groups ranging from Brazil’s historical founders to contemporary politicians such as the Bolsonaros. Through all of this, the dialect has evolved and spread and is now used in a variety of settings, serving different communicational purposes that reflect more progressive and inclusive language ideologies.

3 From Yoruba to Brazilian LGBTQIA+ communities

From 1502 to 1860, the Portuguese crown enslaved more than 10 million Africans (Gomes 2019), took them to Brazil and forced them to work in land cultivation and mining (Mattoso 2001). Despite the atrocities of the colonial period, enslaved Africans and their descendants preserved their cultural and religious traditions as well as their languages (Allen 2012; Gomes 2019). These diverse sociolinguistic groups from mainly West Africa were spread throughout the country, particularly in Bahia state, in the 18th and 19th centuries (Allen 2012), contributing to Brazil’s sociolinguistic landscape and to the evolution of BP. By mixing African languages, such as Yoruba⁴, with European Portuguese and other Indigenous languages from the country, the seeds of Pajubá were planted.

⁴ According to Ethnologue (Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig 2022), Yoruba is a widespread language in southwest Nigeria, and as of March 2022, it has 44,600,000 speakers: 42,600,000 as L1 and 2,000,000 as L2. The language has 21 dialects, such as Oyo, Ijesha, Ila, and Ondo, and is taught in most primary and secondary schools.

According to Rodrigues's (1932 cited in Barroso 2017) ethnolinguistic study of Afro-Brazilian groups living in Bahia at the end of the 19th century, which analysed written documents and lexical items in everyday use, Yoruba was the African language with the greatest effect on BP, influencing its lexicon, morphosyntax and morphosemantics. Apart from its association with language variation, Yoruba was used in the ceremonies of Candomblé⁵, one of the country's most popular religions based on African beliefs (Alonso 2014). Although it shared space with BP and other languages, Yoruba was the most prominent African language during those ceremonies, especially in Bahia, where the first Candomblé temple, *Casa Branca do Engenho Velho*, was founded in 1830 (Allen 2012). The ceremonial use of Yoruba in Candomblé served as the crucible for the development of Pajubá.

African religions, traditions, and languages have been historically marginalised in Brazil, as mainstream Westernised white cultures associated them with witchcraft, voodoo, and “black magic”, perpetuating a discourse of prejudice and discrimination that has persisted since colonial times. Due to these negative attitudes and the low status of Yoruba, this language was used in restricted spaces in the past, such as in the Candomblé temples, in order to hide its speakers' cultural identities and religious habits (Barroso 2017; Cruz and Tito 2016). Because religious intolerance and the marginalisation of African religions have been a problem in Brazil since colonial times, Candomblé had to adapt some of its traditions and became a syncretic religion, integrating into its rituals elements of Christianity, a socially accepted doctrine, allowing for syncretic forms of worship. Moreover, Candomblé temples became spaces where marginalised people, including gender and sexual non-normative people, felt welcome (Allen 2012). Sexual and gender minorities felt more at home in Candomblé ceremonies, while other religions preached against any expression of non-normative sexuality or gender in the name of religious dogmas (Allen 2012). Essentially, Candomblé practitioners in Brazil accepted LGBTQIA+ folks in their doctrine, following the precolonial Yoruba tradition of welcoming same-sex sexual attraction (Onanuga 2022). Authors like Allen (2012) argue that Candomblé temples and traditions were and still are hierarchically “asexual” and agender because they accept everyone regardless of their sexual and gender identities. However, as the author explains, Candomblé was (and in some cases still is) a matriarchal religious space, with women holding higher positions

5 Space does not allow a summary of the literature on the spread and consolidation of Yoruba traditions and Candomblé in Brazil. For more detailed information, see Matory (2005), Allen (2012), Alonso (2019), among others. These authors discuss the development of Yoruba and Candomblé communities in Salvador (Bahia), explaining their arrival during the country's colonization and how the group formed their community in that city and state and influenced Brazilian culture in various ways.

as priestesses. The religious use of Yoruba in the Candomblé temples fostered the development of Pajubá. The sociolinguistic dynamics in the temples prompted sex/gender non-normative practitioners of Candomblé to incorporate Yoruba words used during the religious ceremonies into their vocabulary while retaining the syntactical structures of BP and thus creating a distinctive dialect of their own.

Historically, repressive linguistic and cultural ideologies explain Pajubá's formation and its claims to African origin, given that exclusionary discourses and ideologies have surrounded the dialect and its history since then (Araújo 2022). These same narratives have also excluded other linguistic and cultural products of the "Black Atlantic" (Gilroy 1993), the intertwined cultural, political, historical, and linguistic experiences of black communities across the Atlantic Ocean. Consequently, Brazilian scholars have confronted "the territoriality of national and colonial histories to explore instead the making of Brazilian society in the space of passage, circulations, and cross-cultural exchange between the multiple shores of the Atlantic world" (Araújo 2022: 296). Interpreting Candomblé as a religion of the Black Atlantic, as Matory (2005) describes it, reflects the transnational flows of peoples, languages, goods, and religious beliefs. Furthermore, following Gal & Irvine's (2019) critique of the notion that national languages reveal national characters, focusing on the ideologies that are brought to bear upon the intersection of race, sexuality, and gender represented by Pajubá can explain two sides (of many) discursive struggles over the possible national characters of Brazil, an imaginary construction that opposing forces try to make in their image. On the one hand, forging this character has relied on repressive cultural and linguistic ideologies as well as assimilationist language policies to create a national monolingual language identity stemming from the colonial era. On the other hand, it is an open-minded and embracing character that has advocated for social, political, cultural, and linguistic inclusion, opposing religious, ethnic, linguistic, sexual, and gender discrimination.

4 Pajubá

The publication of *Aurélia, a dicionária da língua afiada* [Aurélia, the sharp-tongued dictionary⁶] (Vip and Libi 2013) enabled academics to view Pajubá as worthy of scholarly attention (Barroso 2017; Lau 2015). With 1,300 Pajubá lexical

⁶ My translation. *Aurélia* is the feminine for *Aurélio*, one of Brazil's most famous dictionaries. The authors of *Aurélia* played with Portuguese grammatical gender binarism to evoke a common practice among the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ community: changing masculine names for their feminine equivalent to queer the language (Lau 2015).

items, the dictionary has become the main reference work for studies of the Brazilian lavender lexicon. Previous studies on Pajubá (also written as Bajubá) range from undergraduate BA and MA theses (Barroso 2017; Netto Junior 2018; Silva 2018) and PhD dissertations (Lima 2017) to academic papers (Araújo 2022; Lau 2015; 2017). Currently, social media platforms and other digital settings sustain the expansion of Pajubá in Brazil and beyond, both inside and outside the LGBTQIA+ community, as I reported elsewhere (Alves Vieira 2022). Studies like these show the importance of the dialect in understanding the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ community's language practices.

Although previous analyses have contributed to a better understanding of Pajubá, so far there is no consensus on whether it is a more complex linguistic code, a dialect, a sociolect, a speech style, a register, or 'just' the slang and expressions used by members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Discussing accurate categorisation is beyond the scope of this chapter. For practicality, I use dialect and slang interchangeably in line with standard lay and media usage (Pati 2018). Some of these studies have also looked at language attitudes towards Pajubá, trying to classify it according to those categories (more complex linguistic code, language, dialect, etc.). For example, Barroso (2017) used a multimethod approach (including an online survey) to conclude that Pajubá should be classified as slang. However, Barroso's survey had limitations, as it only asked the participants' gender identity and sexuality, if they had ever heard of Pajubá and where and how they would classify it, missing substantial insights into the linguistic ideologies towards the dialect. Moreover, much of the scholarly focus has been on how *travestis*, trans women, and cis gay men use the dialect (Lau 2017). Therefore, in order to fill the gaps within the literature regarding current linguistic ideologies surrounding Pajubá with a larger and more diverse LGBTQIA+ sample, this chapter provides an elaborated analysis of the contemporary language attitudes towards the dialect and its developments and uses today.

Initially, Pajubá's emergence and diffusion happened primarily in the religious environment of Candomblé. Subsequently, information channels such as magazines and newspapers helped spread the dialect throughout Brazil. *Travestis* were the first Pajubá speakers to articulate the dialect outside of religious temples during the military dictatorship that started in 1964 (Lima 2017). By the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, Pajubá became popular among Brazilian gay people outside of Candomblé contexts. Many of these speakers were readers of *O Lampião da Esquina*, the first gay newspaper in the country (Trevisan 2018). In the 1990s, LGBTQIA+ people started using and recognising specific words and expressions in Pajubá (Barroso 2017). Erotic magazines such as *G Magazine* (sold throughout Brazil) and more regional ones, such as *Meio Termo* in Manaus, helped spread the dialect (Barroso 2017). More recently, Pajubá has influenced (and been influenced by) digital and online pop culture. For example, Pajubá is used to create memes por-

traying queer linguistic practices that reflect LGBTQIA+ social representation and language variation in BP (Silva 2018). Similarly, TV shows, social media (Barroso 2017), and podcasts (Lau 2017) disseminate the dialect.

According to Araújo's (2022) readings of Lima (2017), Pajubá is more than just a set of words. It is also a way of using language that involves not only vocabulary but also tones, rhythms, gestures, mannerisms, facial expressions, and bodily motions. For instance, effeminate cisgender gay men who behave in an "extravagant" way in public spaces confront hegemonic masculinity with their non-normative demeanour (Lima 2017). Intentionally behaving "extravagantly" is seen as one way in which one can embody Pajubá, given that such behaviour upsets cisnet norms of manliness. Put differently, a physical performance that indexes queerness is also seen as Pajubá, a queer language translated orally, in writing, and through body language. Pajubá is thus a dynamic dialect that continuously evolves through the creation of new words and forms of codification.

Pajubá is a mix of Yoruba, European Portuguese, and, to a lesser extent, Indigenous languages like Tupi (Vip and Libi 2013). Despite being anchored in Portuguese grammar, syntax, and phonology, the dialect challenges this language in different ways, such as in its orthography, offering new ways of writing, reading, speaking, and, consequently, understanding. It provokes language variation and change by upsetting grammatical rules, where users subvert and renovate the linguistic system. For example, Pajubá speakers use different forms for the Portuguese verb *arrasar* 'to slay' [used to praise another person's impressive action] in the simple past: *arrasou* [axazou] (more grammatically expected); *arrasô* [axazo] (more innovative with the accent /' on [o] + last vowel deletion [u]); *arrazou* [axazou] ([x] and [z]); and *ahazou* [ahazou], (with [h], [z]) – akin to what I showed in Alves Vieira (2022). Words like *acuardar* 'to tuck' and *amapô* 'woman' also show similar variation patterns. Additionally, foreign languages, such as English, play a role in the language variation and change that Pajubá promotes (Araújo 2022). For example, BP speakers commonly use the word *gay* to refer to one's sexuality or in the vocative case, as an insult. The same pragmatics of the word *gay* also occur in Pajubá, but when speaking the dialect, some users write and pronounce it backwards: *yag* [iagi]. As the world becomes increasingly globalised, Pajubá – a dialect with a subversive appeal – has expanded its linguistic repertoire to include languages like English. Whenever Pajubá comes into contact with any language, it has the uncanny ability to upset the orthographic rules and conventions, inventing a distinctive and alternative linguistic fusion that defies conventional notions of orthography, syntax, phonology, phonetics, etc.

Some Yoruba lexical items also have different meanings depending on how Pajubá speakers employ them in BP (Barroso 2017). For example, at times, using *amapô* to replace *woman* becomes problematic as it also means *vagina* or *pussy*,

highlighting the sexist, misogynistic, and transphobic connotation of the lexical item: *Nossa, essa amapô é uó!* [*Gee, this woman is distasteful/bad*']. The same applies to using *racha/raxa*, a synonym of *amapô* that can also be derogatory.

As the literature has shown, speakers used Pajubá as a secret linguistic code (Lau 2017). The word *pajubá* in BP is a synonym for *mystery* or *secret*, which corroborates the notion of a cryptolect. *Pajubá* also means *news* and *gossip* among its speakers (Barroso 2017), but as Araújo (2022) proposes, understanding *Pajubá* as a secret or mystery may be productive concerning its social history, given that the dialect has been used in Brazil as a secret or anti-language – an enigmatic way of communicating to exclude outsiders, used by those who need to be secretive (Cameron and Kulick 2006). On this note, Pajubá can also be used on different occasions and for other purposes, such as to fight against LGBTQIA+phobia verbally (Silva 2018), making the dialect a sociolinguistic tool of resistance (Lima 2017). Using Pajubá is also how LGBTQIA+ individuals reappropriate slurs addressed to them, for example, in the case of the word '*bicha*' (Lau 2015; Silva 2018). Equivalent to faggot in English, *bicha* or the short *bi* (also written as *bee* to echo the English word) is now used in the vocative case among friends in BP. Lastly, Pajubá is used to euphemise pornographic expressions comically and introduce LGBTQIA+ youth to non-hegemonic gender identities and dissident sexual identity categories (Barroso 2017).

5 Methodology

An online questionnaire developed using Qualtrics was chosen because it is a systematic technique with a broad geographic reach to produce quantitative and qualitative data (Sue and Ritter 2012). The designed methodology followed Sue & Ritter's *Survey Process Flow*, which consists of a) defining the objectives of the study (see Introduction); b) conducting a literature review on the case study (Sections 2, 3, and 4); and c) launching and promoting the survey via e-mail and social media (mainly through a friend-of-a-friend technique, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp). Before the last step, the Ethics Committee of Leiden University checked the research objectives and granted the project clearance for the data collection, analysis, and publication. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: 1) the participants' background information (age, gender, sexuality, region/country of residency), and 2) questions about their knowledge, usage, and attitudes towards Pajubá.

The study surveyed BP native speakers aged 18 years and above and 910 participants completed the anonymous and voluntary survey in Portuguese⁷

7 All the answers were translated by me.

between February 2 and 16, 2021. Of these, 435 respondents identified themselves as LGBTQIA+, whose responses will be discussed in the following section. Since Pajubá is known as the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ dialect and the queer community is at the receiving end of the particular ideological tensions discussed above, I focus on this group's responses for two main reasons. First, to establish the extent to which Pajubá is used by marginalized people in the context of stigmatization, and to identify the purposes for which it is used by members of these groups. While I also discuss non-LGBTQIA+ speakers' opinions and usages, showing that Pajubá is used in different settings, and by a broad range of people, this is to corroborate these arguments. Second, this focus is motivated by QL's unwavering commitment to listening to marginalised voices in times of tension when their perspectives are most valuable to liberatory social projects.

Regarding gender identity, 403 participants identified as cisgender and 12 as transgender. Among the 20 participants who chose 'Other', five indicated that they were intersex, one gender fluid, one cisgender for the outside world while agender for themselves. Two participants did not specify any category, and one of them explained that they are used to their gender identity and think that the social construction around it is "a stupid thing", while 11 indicated their sexualities instead of their genders, suggesting a lack of familiarity with the distinction between gender and sexual identity. When asked about their sexual identities, 324 identified as homosexual, 72 as bisexual, 30 as pansexual, five as heterosexual (trans), three as asexual, and one as "a mix of bisexual and asexual".

The results discussed below broadly represent BP native speakers' attitudes towards the uses of Pajubá regardless of other identity markers such as educational background, place of birth, or residence. The data analysed revealed various attitudes and offered a glimpse into the various communicative purposes of Pajubá and the settings in which the dialect is used, informing the participants' language attitudes and progressive linguistic ideologies.

6 Results and analysis

Pajubá was initially spoken predominantly by gay men, transgender women, and *travestis*. Since its emergence in the Candomblé temples, the dialect has however reached speech communities with a wide variety of sexual orientations and gender identities (Alves Vieira 2022; Barroso 2017; Lau 2015). The responses analysed here support the idea that Pajubá use is no longer exclusive to the LGBTQIA+ community. When asked if Pajubá was spoken a) only by members of this community or b) by anyone regardless of their gender identity and sexuality, 39% (169) chose the

former option, and 61% (266) the latter. These diverging opinions were expected given each participant's relationship with Pajubá and their positionality, confirming that social groups are not perfectly determined by ideologies and that these do not create uniform subjects (Gal and Irvine 2019) – or in this case, a uniform LGBTQIA+ community. By stating that Pajubá is not restricted to those who identify as LGBTQIA+, the participants support an open and inclusive approach to language use that cultivates greater acceptance among people regardless of their gender and sexual identities. At the same time, they advocate for a less strict binary view of how queer and non-queer groups should speak – as implied by more conservative social actors, such as the Bolsonaros. Linguistic ideologies like these not only reflect the community's broader values of acceptance and inclusivity but also indicate the dialect's higher status in Brazilian society today, as this chapter proposes. Interestingly, these results demonstrate that Pajubá kept the inclusiveness it inherited from Yoruba speakers practitioners of Candomblé, who accepted LGBTQIA+ folks. Similarly, this study's participants accept that cisgender straight people may use Pajubá, which is also corroborated by the overall results of my project, showing that 617 participants think that Pajubá is used by everyone, while 293 believe it is used exclusively by the LGBTQIA+ community. In addition to the 435 LGBTQIA+ participants' responses analysed in this chapter, the overall project's questionnaire includes the opinions and attitudes towards Pajubá by 387 cishet women and 51 cishet men. The remaining 37 participants provided unclear information about their gender identity or sexuality. For instance, one person identified as LGBTQIA+ but then chose the options cisgender, female, and straight. Another did not provide information about their gender and wrote that they have LGBTQIA+ friends instead. Such ambiguous responses have been excluded from this analysis, even if the participants have chosen the option *yes* to the question *Do you identify as LGBTQIA+?*

Kinyua (2017) analysed a queer speech community in Nairobi, Kenya, confirming that queer communities use lavender lexicons differently (see also Kulick 2000). According to Kinyua's results, some people prefer to use queer language only to discuss sexuality and gender, while others refrain from using it altogether as it would be perceived as 'too' queer, and they do not want to be associated with it⁸. To know why, when, and where people use Pajubá, I adapted Kinyua's research and used the literature on Pajubá to systematise the social factors that influence its use in the everyday lives of native BP speakers (Table 6.1). For this survey item, participants could select as many options as they wanted and add extra reasons to the option 'Other'.

⁸ See Kinyua (2017) for more information about queer language use in a different Global South setting.

Table 6.1: Why people use Pajubá.

Why do people use Pajubá?	# of times selected
Because it is funny	312
To socialise	295
To feel they belong to the LGBTQIA+ community	264
Because using Pajubá has always been part of the Brazilian LGBT+ identity	199
To feel good about themselves as LGBTQIA+ people	164
To feel accepted by other people from the LGBTQIA+ community	83
To separate the LGBTQIA+ and the straight communities	64
To conceal their identity from straight people	12
To conceal their LGBTQIA+ identity from family members	10
Because LGBTQIA+ individuals must use the dialect	7
To conceal their identity for fear of oppression, prejudice, and stigmatisation	0
Other	21

As is shown in Table 6.1, the most common reasons participants attributed to people in general for using Pajubá were its association with humour, socialising, and creating a sense of belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community. Specifically, this study’s participants highlighted the more positive attitudes and showed minoritarian negative attitudes towards the dialect, confirming the findings of my earlier study (Alves Vieira 2022).

The fact that “because it is funny” was the most commonly cited reason for using Pajubá should be interpreted against discursive struggle over the possible national characters of Brazil mentioned earlier. Choosing “because it is funny” exemplifies how Pajubá users can express their queer identities and navigate a very complex linguistic landscape where opposing forces try to create an imagined Brazilian queer and non-queer character. For example, despite the political conservatism that hinders Pajubá’s development, the LGBTQIA+ community can use the dialect to show creative interpretations of it in a conflictual arena: Brazilian society. Put differently, these participants engage in a counter-discourse that disregards or opposes conservative linguistic ideologies towards the dialect, prioritising Pajubá’s funniness. These conflicting opinions about the dialect relate to the multi-layered ideological character of the Brazilian identity, exemplifying the country’s active and controversial making of social life. While some ostracise Pajubá and, consequently, the LGBTQIA+ community, this study’s participants focus on the positive uses of the dialect to stylise and humanise themselves in the face of oppression, showing one side of a multifaceted Brazilian identity. The funniness of Pajubá is often seen in memes (Silva 2018), where its users euphemise pornographic expressions comically (Barroso 2017) or challenge traditional societal and language norms, leading to unexpected and playful slang and expressions such as in the cases discussed in

Section 4. By breaking linguistic expectations, Pajubá often creates humour. Furthermore, such funniness can be understood as a powerful form of resistance since it can question those norms, challenge authority, or even cope with difficult circumstances such as LGBTQIA+-phobia. Seeing Pajubá as a funny dialect can help its speakers find strength and resilience in the face of adversity, given that humour can serve as a coping mechanism.

Pajubá's funniness should however not be seen purely from what Billig (2005) calls the "ideological positivist" perspective, which emphasises the positive and healthy aspects of laughter while repressing its cruel and ridiculing aspects. What society finds "funny" can reveal its own dominant power structures. Humour can be a powerful weapon in critiquing conservative ideologies towards marginalized groups, and Pajubá's funniness is a great example of this. However, laughing at conservative (language) ideologies without actively trying to change them is not enough. In fact, it can even contribute to the perpetuation of those repressive ideologies. As Burnett (2022) argues, humour does not occupy a special place outside of discourse: "it too is involved in the processes of contesting social vision [. . .and] being able to laugh in contexts of repression and dehumanisation is tied up with hegemonic orders" (Burnett 2022: 114). Humour studies that follow a critical approach must show how oppression, discipline, and social control are ingrained in humour. Thus when looking at Pajubá's funniness, one should contemplate two of its possible aspects – rebellion and discipline – that both suggest ongoing discursive struggles. At times, Pajubá speakers may perceive themselves as rebellious for laughing at gender and sexual hegemonic ideologies and (linguistic) conservatism, yet they may not realize that they are also enforcing the existing order.

Pajubá's funniness might also reveal a troubling ideology that positions the dialect and Brazilian LGBTQIA+ individuals as intrinsically funny in the eyes of cis het people (Silva 2018). The latter sometimes create a caricature of gay men, lesbians, and transgender folks as occupying a fundamentally unserious 'pigeon-hole'. Following Hill's (2008) analysis of Mock Spanish, I argue that when asked about a specific instance of Pajubá or the LGBTQIA+ community, non-queer people will often mention its humorous aspect, sometimes justifying their opinions with supposedly positive attitudes towards the community that also display underlying negative overtones. As Gal and Irvine (2019: 21) explain, "ideologies are totalising visions" and "elements that cannot be seen to fit the ideological schema are often ignored or transformed". In other words, although being funny is one aspect of Pajubá and a reason to use it for some LGBTQIA+ folks, one should not expect the dialect or its users to be necessarily funny, running the risk of essentialising their linguistic, sexual, and gender identities. Following Gal and Irvine's (2019) use of Hill's work, the present analysis thus raises awareness about the ideological impli-

cations of assuming that Pajubá or the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ community are funny in essence, which is at times implied by Brazilians, revealing prejudice and LGBTQIA+-phobic insinuations. Pajubá's funniness should, too, raise questions about how humour can perpetuate repressive ideologies and discipline queerness in Brazil. As the results in Table 6.1 have shown, there is more to the dialect and the community than 'just' being funny – even if this seems to be a recurrent ideology towards both.

Twenty-one participants added 'Other' reasons that people use Pajubá. These include: "because it is normal and part of people's lives", "[Pajubá] is a social phenomenon", "for political reasons since every minority language is political", and "because it is trendy". One of the participants also added the word *meme*, which suggests that people use Pajubá to create internet memes or communicate through Pajubá memes, coinciding with Silva's (2018) argument that Pajubá speakers use the dialect to communicate in online/digital spaces. These answers showcase more positive linguistic ideologies because they explain that Pajubá is not only a normal social phenomenon and part of people's lives but also a trend among Brazilians. In other words, Pajubá is a habitual and prestigious linguistic practice representing aspects of its speakers' social lives, commonly accepted or expected within the LGBTQIA+ community and beyond. These positive attitudes speak to conforming to societal expectations, which is relevant to the case of Pajubá, a previously stigmatised dialect. When participants state that Pajubá is normal and part of people's lives, they assume that the dialect fits into the linguistic landscape, contributing to the sociolinguistic fabric that shapes Brazilian society and BP. Moreover, when they mention the dialect's political aspect and its trendiness, they refer to how it has evolved through time, influenced by multiple (marginalised) voices.

On the one hand, when participants emphasise the political aspect of Pajubá as a minority "language", they address power dynamics within Brazilian society. Being political speaks to the struggles black and queer people have faced in Brazil since colonial times that have been an intrinsic aspect of Pajubá since its emergence in the temples of Candomblé. When participants stress that Pajubá is political, they refer to the struggles over linguistic representation, inclusivity, and recognition within Brazilian society. Simultaneously, they accentuate the struggles for acceptance, equal rights, and the acknowledgement of gender and sexual diversity. On the other hand, being trendy captures the spirit of Brazil's contemporaneity, which allows for more linguistic, sexual, and gender diversity – despite political conservatism. The participants acknowledge that Pajubá has become trendy, reflecting the dynamic nature of language evolution. Likewise, its trendiness resonates with the ever-changing nature of LGBTQIA+ culture, contributing to understanding the richness of linguistic, sexual and gender expression.

Additionally, one participant mentioned in their responses that “Candomblé practitioners use Pajubá words in liturgical contexts”. When the participant acknowledges Pajubá’s presence in liturgical contexts, they also highlight the intersectionality of race, religion, gender and sexuality in Brazil, a country with a complicated history of colonialism and political conflicts. Such battles have influenced the country’s views on diversity and acceptance. Therefore, the use of Pajubá in Candomblé ceremonies can be seen as a reflection of Brazil’s complex relationship with issues of race, religion, gender and sexuality and the challenges the country has faced in promoting inclusivity and tolerance. Because Candomblé has been marginalised since its establishment and Pajubá is understood as a queer articulation of the Black Atlantic (Araújo 2022), both are often discussed in the context of race relations in Brazil. Consequently, when the participant mentions the use of Pajubá in the liturgical context of Candomblé, they address the religious and racial aspects of Pajubá that speak to the repressive linguistic ideologies discussed previously. Although the survey did not investigate these aspects, this type of response supports existing literature that emphasises these connections, asserting that people see Pajubá as a result of Afro-Brazilian cultures.

One important finding was that Pajubá does not appear to be stigmatised as an offensive dialect. As a result of Brazil’s ongoing discrimination against sexual and gender diversity, some LGBTQIA+ slang and expressions may be considered offensive. Additionally, because Pajubá includes slang and expressions with “pornographic” and “vulgar” connotations, using the dialect may be considered by some as disrespectful. To address this issue, I asked participants about negative attitudes towards the dialect. Their responses revealed that 99% (429) did *not* consider it offensive, while only 1% (6) chose *yes*. Some respondents elaborated on their answer, stating that Pajubá slang and expressions are offensive when “they do not respect formal textual genres (letters, minutes, or even oral, formal genres such as seminars, etc.)”; “when non-queer people use them to talk about LGBTQIA+ individuals, showing discrimination”; “when they perpetuate stereotypes about LGBTQIA+ folks”; and “when they express prejudice such as the slang *POC*”, an acronym for *pão com ovo* (bread with egg – literal translation) to refer to inconspicuous feminine gay men, usually due to their lack of sense of style or low-income background. Although 6 participants stated that Pajubá is offensive, their answers did not talk about the dialect itself but rather about discriminatory discourses against members of the LGBTQIA+ community expressed in or because of Pajubá – a dialect that was once marginalised but that now holds a more prestigious status. These results are also examples of more inclusive linguistic ideologies.

Another survey question asked participants about other communicational settings and situations where people use(d) Pajubá, which is shown in Table 6.2 with the number of times each option was selected.

Table 6.2: Settings and means of communication where people use Pajubá.

Where/When people use Pajubá	# of times selected
In communication with friends	420
In communication with acquaintances	211
In podcasts	185
On TV	133
On the radio	52
In communication with colleagues at work	49
On magazines	49
On newspapers	13
I do not hear/see people using Pajubá	4
Other	46

Amongst the forty-six elaborated responses added to the option ‘Other,’ most of the participants provided more general answers, such as “on the internet”, “on the streets”, “on social media”, and “at informal (LGBTQIA+) social gatherings”. Others specified these answers by naming social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube) and specific channels, such as *Põe na Roda*, a famous Brazilian LGBTQIA+ YouTube channel.

Seeing that Pajubá occupies numerous settings also reflects more positive linguistic ideologies, showing how the dialect’s status has changed in Brazilian society. As this chapter has shown, the dialect was initially only used in stigmatised spaces and by marginalised individuals. Today, however, Pajubá is present in different settings, used for different purposes, and by a diverse group that includes cis het as well as LGBTQIA+ people. Studying Pajubá in more formal settings, such as at work, can inform us about language practices in the work environment and possible professional uses of the dialect – perhaps an exciting avenue for future research. Likewise, seeing that the dialect is used in different media outlets such as TV, radio, magazines and newspapers supports one of this study’s central conclusions, that Pajubá has a more prestigious status in the country today since language prestige influences language use in the media. As media outlets often use linguistic styles associated with higher social status, having Pajubá in those media outlets shows that the ideologies towards the dialect and its speakers have changed. In other words, these media outlets’ language choices reflect Pajubá’s perceived current prestige, shaping communication in a queer way to appeal not only to LGBTQIA+ people but also to their non-queer counterparts. Overall, seeing Pajubá being used in various means of communication and settings today is very telling of its resilience, versatility, and adaptability, as well as the current linguistic ideologies toward this national linguistic heritage.

7 Conclusion

In response to Leap's (2021) call and recent developments within queer linguistics that point to ways of moving the field forward, this chapter has examined an understudied, non-Anglophone community from the Global South, renewing the commitment to intersectional and queer linguistics. Ultimately, it investigated how the contemporary Brazilian LGBTQIA+ community uses Pajubá, shedding light on cultural and sociolinguistic practices and language ideologies that sustain or challenge linguistic normativity and sociopolitical conservatism in Brazil. Despite stigmatisation and the segregation of African beliefs and traditions, Yoruba and Candomblé fostered a linguistic, cultural and religious dialogue with other Brazilian "sub-cultures", such as the LGBTQIA+ community. By influencing the structure and lexicon of BP, Yoruba helped the community to create its lavender lexicon. Since colonisation, BP has acquired different shapes, always motivated by sociopolitical differences. Given that the evolution of this language has happened in the context of assimilationist language policies and ideologies, marginalised groups such as enslaved Africans and the LGBTQIA+ community had only one option to survive: join forces to resist oppression to keep existing and developing. Because queer individuals are usually the ones marginalised in Brazilian society, this chapter intentionally focused on the LGBTQIA+ community's attitudes towards and uses of Pajubá, reinforcing QL's responsibility to amplify the voices of marginalised groups in times and places of ideological disputes. Additionally, this study showed that despite political conservatism and the sexual, gender, racial, religious, and linguistic oppressions embedded in it, Pajubá has evolved, occupying different settings, and been used for various communicational purposes by individuals with different sexual and gender identities, including non-queer people – sometimes motivated by its funniness. Moving forward, this chapter encourages more analysis of social dynamics and interactions among Pajubá speakers, helping understand how they style themselves linguistically through Pajubá and the linguistic ideologies embedded in such uses. Lastly, inspired by Gal and Irvine's (2019) work, this chapter also advocates for more studies focusing on explicit or implicit ideologies surrounding Pajubá that can contribute to disputes or disagreements, such as the self-awareness of Pajubá's speakers and those who oppose the dialect, active criticism of its use and social inequalities and situations in which sociolinguistic conflicts arise. Studying these factors can help us uncover the origins and motivations of other (queer) Brazilian battlefields.

References

- Allen, Andrea Stevenson. 2012. 'Brides' without husbands: Lesbians in the Afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé. *Transforming Anthropology* 20(1). 17–31. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-7466.2011.01141.x>
- Alonso, Miguel. C. 2014. *The development of Yoruba Candomblé communities in Salvador, Bahia, 1835–1986*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Alves Vieira, Eduardo. 2022. O uso de gírias e expressões LGBTQIA+ por mulheres cis-heterossexuais. [The use of LGBTQIA+ slang and expressions by cis-heterosexual women]. *Cadernos De Linguagem E Sociedade* 23(2). 21–42. <https://doi.org/10.26512/les.v23i2.42475>
- Araújo, Caio Simões de. 2022. Pajubá. In Dilip M. Menon (ed.), *Changing Theory: Concepts from the Global South*, 291–305. London: Routledge India.
- Barroso, Renato Régis. 2017. *Pajubá: o código linguístico da comunidade LGBT*. [Pajubá: the linguistic code of the LGBT community] Manaus: Universidade do Estado do Amazonas dissertation. <https://pos.uea.edu.br/data/area/dissertacao/download/27-18.pdf>
- Benevides, Bruna. G. 2023. *Dossiê: assassinatos e violências contra travestis e transexuais brasileiras em 2022*. [Dossier: murders and violence against Brazilian transvestites and transsexuals in 2022]. ANTRA (Associação Nacional de Travestis e Transexuais), Distrito Drag. Brasília: ANTRA.
- Billig, Michael. 2005. *Laughter and ridicule: Towards a social critique of humour*. London: Sage.
- Borba, Rodrigo. 2015. Linguística Queer: Uma perspectiva pós-identitária para os estudos da linguagem. [Queer Linguistics: A post-identity perspective for language studies]. *Revista Entrelinhas*, 9(1). 91–107. <https://doi.org/10.4013/10378>
- Borba, Rodrigo. 2022. Enregistering 'gender ideology': The emergence and circulation of a transnational anti-gender language. *Journal of Language and Sexuality*, 11(1). 57–79. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jls.21003.bor>
- Borba, Rodrigo & Ana Cristina Ostermann. 2007. Do bodies matter? Travestis' embodiment of (trans) gender identity through the manipulation of the Brazilian Portuguese grammatical system. *Gender and Language* 1(1). 131–147. <https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.2007.1.1.131>.
- Burnett, Scott. 2022. *White belongings: Race, land, and property in post-apartheid South Africa*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Cameron, Deborah & Don Kulick (eds.). 2006. *The Language and Sexuality Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Cruz, Luan & Raphael de Paula Tito. 2016. A comunidade LGBT no desdobramento da língua iorubá. [The LGBT community in the development of the Yoruba language]. *Cadernos do CNLF: Sociolinguística, dialetologia e geografia linguística*, 20(12). 9–21.
- Eberhard, David M., Simons, Gary F. & Charles D. Fennig. 2022. Ethnologue: Languages of the World. (Twenty-fifth). Dallas, Texas: SIL International. <http://www.ethnologue.com> (accessed 8 March 2023)
- Gal, Susan & Judith T. Irvine. 2019. *Signs of difference: Language and ideology in social life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gilroy, Paul. 1995. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Hill, Jane. 2008. *The Everyday Language of White Racism*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Johnson, E. Patrick. 2001 'Quare' studies, or (almost) everything I know about queer studies I learned from my grandmother. *Text and Performance Quarterly* 21(1). 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10462930128119>

- Kinyua, Gemma Kaimuri. 2017. *A lexical-semantic analysis of the language of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities in Nairobi city county, Kenya*. Nairobi: Kenyatta University dissertation.
- Kulick, Don. 2000. Gay and lesbian language. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29. 242–285. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.29.1.243>
- Lau, Héilton Diego. 2015. A (des)informação do bajubá: fatores da linguagem da comunidade LGBT para a sociedade. [The (dis)information of Bajubá: linguistic factors of the LGBT community to society]. *Revista Temática* 11(2). 90–101.
- Lau, Héilton Diego. 2017. Será que toda “mona” fala “bichês”? A questão da linguagem e identidade da comunidade LGBT. [Does every “mona” speak “queer”? The question of language and identity in the LGBT community]. *Revista Temática* 13(3). 160–174. <https://doi.org/10.22478/ufpb.1807-8931.2017v13n3.33400>.
- Leap, William L. (ed.). 1995. *Beyond the lavender lexicon: Authenticity, imagination, and appropriation in lesbian and gay languages*. Routledge.
- Leap, William L. 2021. Moving into the next ten years. *Journal of Language and Sexuality*, 10(1). 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jls.00009.lea>
- Lima, Carlos Henrique. 2017. Linguagens Pajubeyras: Re(ex)istência cultural e subversão da heteronormatividade. [Pajubá languages: Cultural re(ex)istence and subversion of heteronormativity]. Salvador: Editora Devires.
- Matory, J. Lorand. 2005. *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Mattoso, Kátia de. 2001. *Ser escravo no Brasil*. [Being a slave in Brazil]. São Paulo: Brasiliense.
- Netto Junior, Neurivan Gonçalves. 2018. *O percurso semântico de alguns vocábulos do pajubá: gírias faladas pelas bichas*. [The semantic path of some words from Pajubá: slang spoken by queers.]. Brasília: Universidade de Brasília dissertation.
- Onanuga, Paul Ayodele. 2022. Navigating homophobia and reinventing the self: An analysis of Nigerian digital pro-gay discourse. *Gender and Language* 16(1). 75–97. <https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.18778>
- Pati, Camila. 2018. November 10. Esta é a questão do Enem que fez Bolsonaro decidir fiscalizar a prova. [This is the Enem issue that made Bolsonaro decide to monitor the test.] Exame: <https://exame.com/brasil/esta-e-a-questao-do-enem-que-fez-bolsonaro-decidir-fiscalizar-a-prova/>
- Rodrigues, Nina. 1932. *Os africanos no Brasil*. [Africans in Brazil]. São Paulo: Nacional.
- Silva, André Luiz Souza da. 2018. *Gíria LGBT como empoderamento linguístico: a construção de sentidos no gênero “Meme”*. [LGBT slang as linguistic empowerment: the construction of meanings in the “Meme” genre]. Guarabira: Universidade Estadual da Paraíba dissertation.
- Sue, Valerie & Louis A. Ritter. 2012. *Conducting Online Surveys*, 2nd edn. London: Sage.
- Trevisan, João Silvério. 2018. *Devassos no Paraíso: A homossexualidade no Brasil, da colônia à atualidade*. [Debauchees in paradise: Homosexuality in Brazil from colonial times to the present day]. Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva.
- Vip, Angelo & Fred Libi. 2013. *Aurélia: a dicionária da língua afiada*. [Aurélia: the sharp-tongued dictionary]. São Paulo: Bispo.
- Zimman, Lal. 2018. Transgender language, transgender moment: Towards a trans linguistics. In Kira Hall & Rusty Barret (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Sexuality*. Online version. Oxford Academic.

