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A Portuguese language variety in Japan: Dekasegi Portuguese as a sociolect

Felipe Dall'Ava
UNIVERSITY OF MACAU

ABSTRACT

Due to colonization and migratory movements, the Portuguese language can be found all over the globe. In Japan, it is mainly spoken by the Brazilian and other Latin American immigrant communities that have been established there since the early 1990s, in most cases, employed as a cheap workforce. Since then, this newly emerged Portuguese variety underwent a process of language change: in the vocabulary and phonology. In this paper, we would like to provide examples and arguments that support the idea that this language variety is a sociolect.

Keywords: Dekasegi Portuguese, Japanese, Sociolect, Language Change, Immigration.

Por conta de processos de colonização e de imigração, o Português pode ser ouvido em diversas regiões do mundo. No Japão, é falado principalmente pelas comunidades de imigrantes brasileiros e latino-americanos que ali se estabeleceram desde o início dos anos 1990, na maioria dos casos, empregados como mão de obra barata. Desde então, uma nova variedade do Português emergiu e passou por diferentes processos de mudança linguística: no vocabulário e na fonologia. Nesse artigo, apresentaremos exemplos e argumentos que sustentam a ideia de que essa variedade se trata de um socioleto.

Palavras-chave: Português Decasségui, Japonês, Socioleto, Mudança Linguística, Imigração.

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Introduction

There have been a few different settings whereupon Portuguese and Japanese languages went through constant contact. Historically, we can indicate at least three major periods: first, in the 16th and 17th centuries through a commercial exchange, such as the Nanban trade, and also under the Portuguese ecclesiastical influence in Nagasaki, Japan (Boxer 1985; Pflugfelder 2007); second, throughout the first half of the 20th century with the arrival and settlement of Japanese immigrants to work in plantations in Brazil (Costa 2007; Moreno 2009); and third, at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century through the Dekasegi movement, that is, the influx of Brazilians to Japan to be employed as low-cost labor, commonly as blue-collar workers in electronics, automotive and manufacturing industry (Riordian 2005; Cherrier 2011; Sakai 2010; Vilog 2011; Roncato 2013).

Keeping up with the shifts that shaped the economic and social context from the time, there were also changes in the new linguistic panorama. The need for dictionaries and glossaries, or the emergence of loanwords in both Portuguese and Japanese as a result of language contact are some common elements to any of these periods. There were also, though, idiosyncrasies. For instance, in the first period, there is evidence of a Portuguese-Japanese pidgin in Nagasaki spoken by locals, by Portuguese, and even by Dutch merchants (Maher 2004). From the second period, it is possible to identify varieties of Japanese developed in Brazil that are highly influenced by Brazilian Portuguese, nonstandard varieties of Japanese, and sometimes, other Japonic languages as Okinawan, for instance, Koronia-go (Ota 2008, 2009; Ono 2014) and Burajiru-Okinawa-Koronia-go (Gibo 2016) or, going oppositely, Portuguese varieties greatly influenced by Japanese speech, such as Japanese-Brazilian Portuguese (Suehiro Matsumoto and Bueno 2017). From the third period, the one which we are most concerned and will pursue in this paper, variation in the Portuguese language employed by those Brazilians who moved to Japan has already been detected in the literature, at least in the lexical (Dias 2015) and phonological level (Matsumoto and Okumura 2020a, 2020b). In consonance with Dall'Ava (2021), henceforth, we will call this new Portuguese language variety developed primarily in the Japanese archipelago by the Brazilian community Dekasegi Portuguese[1] [2].

[1] This variety has received quite different labels. It is sometimes called in Portuguese as *Dekassês* (Kono 2001), *Dekasseguês* (Dias 2015), *Nihonguês* (Cherrier 2013) or *Variante do Português Brasileiro no Japão* (Sakaguchi 2017). In English, though, we adopted the name *Dekasegi Portuguese* (PT: Português Decasségui). For a further discussion about these different nomenclatures, see Dall'Ava (2021).

[2] PT: Standard Brazilian Portuguese; EN: Standard American English; JA: Standard Japanese.

In the next section, we will present the overall characteristics of Dekasegi Portuguese together with some examples to better illustrate the linguistic phenomena.

Migration movements to Brazil and Japan

Throughout its history, Japan has always been a quite conservative country towards immigration (cf. Brody 2002). Even with a recent steady increase in numbers, immigrants don't represent more than 2% of the total population (Okada 2018). This still modest growth in statistics came from reforms by the ending of the last century, in which the Japanese government decided to ease some of its immigration restrictions, pushed by its capital needs to expand a poignant economy in a scenario with a shortage of cheap human capital (Watanabe 2010; Córdova Quero and Shoji 2014).

These new immigration rules would be orientated, though, to a specific group: the Nikkei, that is, Japanese descendants. Trying not to draw attention to racial or ethnic elements that could bring further sensitive discussions in the Japanese society (Lie 2001; Costa 2007; Córdova Quero 2009), under certain conditions, Japanese descendants up to third-generation were allowed to immigrate to Japan together with their spouses and children (Tsuda 2003; Córdova Quero 2009; Sakai 2010; Goshima 2011; Watarai 2014)[3]. At first, these political changes aimed, above all, on attracting Nikkei Latin Americans to be employed as temporary cheap workforce in key industry sectors in Japan. Countries like Brazil and Peru were the main targets of this policy since they both hold a large Nikkei population in the periphery of the world capitalist trade system (Chase-Dunn et al. 2000; Wallerstein 2004).

Thirty years after the implementation of these immigration reforms, it became clear that these Latin Americans weren't necessarily temporary immigrants. This condition produced a phenomenon called the Dekasegi movement (Sasaki 2009b; Dias 2015), that is, a back-and-forth immigration movement between Latin America and Japan, which shifts and balances according to the social-economical context of each region in a given period. If there are benefits in moving or staying in Japan, like in periods of market expansion, there is a tendency to stay in Japan, otherwise, if the situation is better off or advantageous in their home country (such as Brazil), they might move back waiting for a possible promising scenario in the future. This is an already well-documented and notable phenomenon, that is framed and categorized under an

[3] Currently, this is extended to Nikkei up to the fourth generation (Yonsei). But for them, the requirements and rules are much stricter than they are for the previous generations. See Resstel (2019).

umbrella term known as circular migration (Costa 2007; Vertovec 2008; Newland 2009; Matsue and Pereira 2017). Dekasegi Brazilian community also holds a substantial number of transitory or definitive returnees. Ultimately, this means that are Brazilian Dekasegi individuals (and, hence, Dekasegi Portuguese speakers) mainly in Japan, but also in Brazil (Sato 2013; Izawa 2015; Souza and Almeida 2015).

For a significant number of Dekasegi community members, what initially could be understood as a plan for making savings for a couple of years to eventually return to Brazil, turned into a more prolonged stay in Japan. In the long run, at least some of these immigrants permanently settled in Japan (Nakagawa 2005). Remarkably, this made the Japanese archipelago home for the second largest Brazilian diaspora in the world (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, 2011), becoming by far the most common and traditional migrant destination for Brazilians in Asia (Milanez 2013; United Nations Children's Fund 2013). Brazil alone represents around 75% of all Latin American immigrant residents in Japan (Statistics Bureau of Japan 2021).

This dynamic brought some new variables and features to Japan. In practice, that meant the immigrant population's culture and customs would be brought and be in contact with a Japanese cultural and ethnical homogeneous model (Lie 2001; Nakashima 2017), which required and also implied new governmental policies to accommodate these immigrants (Oishi 2012; Okada 2018). From a linguistic perspective, it's important to stress that these Latin Americans although sometimes aware of a few Japanese customs, usually didn't have enough command in Standard Japanese when moving to the archipelago (Beltrão and Sugahara 2006; Takenaka 2009a, 2009b) and few would have time or opportunity engaging to improve or learn it (Roncato 2013). Thus, through these immigrants, Portuguese and Spanish would steadily be present in Japan, and *de facto* making them part of the archipelago language inventory. During the last 30 years of the Dekasegi movement, though, these languages would show signs of language variation, as a result of language contact with Japanese and other languages.

As we will better discuss in the next section, the Portuguese variety spoken and written by these Brazilian immigrants already went through lexical and phonological variation.

An analysis of Dekasegi Portuguese as a language variety

In the literature, it is possible to find some debates regarding the emergence of the Portuguese language in Japan, holding features distinct from Standard Brazilian Portuguese or other Portuguese varieties. Kono (2001) is one of the very

first to notice loanwords from Japanese shaping and forging the Portuguese language as employed by the Dekasegi community in Japan. According to him, words used in the workplace, such as *yakin* (EN: night shift), *hirukin* (EN: day shift), or *kyūkei* (EN: break, recess) can be traced back to the early 1990s. This means that right from the start these loanwords were part of the everyday life of these immigrants, being employed by them or by local Portuguese language media. A reason for this early and common use of Japanese loanwords might be explained, at least partly, from an already frequent adoption of Japanese words by the Nikkei community back in Brazil, even before the Dekasegi movement. Suehiro Matsumoto and Bueno (2017) draw attention to a previously established Japanese-Brazilian Portuguese variety (PT: Variante Nipo-Brasileira) in Brazil, which is somewhat influenced by Japanese, occurring in a diglossic context with Standard Brazilian Portuguese, and is employed inside Brazilian Nikkei communities in areas with a high concentration of Japanese Brazilians. Since, in Brazil, most Japanese immigrants came from West Japanese provinces, this Portuguese variety was deeply influenced by non-standard Japanese, mostly by West Japanese dialects, such as the Kansai variety (Mase 1987)[4].

Although there would be other works mentioning or examining Portuguese-Japanese language contact in the archipelago, such as Nakamizu (2003) and Shigematsu (2012), it would be with Dias (2015) that the discussion regarding the development of a Portuguese language variety in Japan would gain the spotlight. She would present additional loanwords, providing extra examples of how Portuguese would perform under a Japanese language context. Most of these loanwords are related to the labor domain, and, as expected, exhibit some traits of the socioeconomic status of the Brazilian community in Japan. To illustrate it, we bring an example as presented by her. Examples like these will always be followed by translations to (a) Standard Brazilian Portuguese and (b) Standard American English (Dias 2015, 85):

(1) *Gomen*, eu esqueci meu *keitai* e nem deu para te avisar que ia ter *zangyo*.
(1a) *Desculpe-me*, eu esqueci meu *celular* e nem deu para te avisar que ia ter *hora-extra*.
(1b) *Sorry*, I forgot my *cellphone* and I couldn't tell you about the *overtime*.

[4] Agostinho and Richter (2020) recognize that Nikkei Brazilians are part of a speech community, therefore, sharing similar vocabulary and linguistic norms. For a further discussion laying out and advocating for the existence of a Japanese-Brazilian Portuguese, see Suehiro Matsumoto and Bueno (2017) and Dall'Ava (2021).

Words like *gomen*, *keitai*, and *zangyo* aren't segments of the Standard Brazilian Portuguese lexicon and they don't convey a meaning on most Portuguese varieties either. During our research for neologisms in Brazilian Dekasegi-oriented Facebook groups, we also have detected a considerable number of loanwords (Dall'Ava forthcoming Summer 2022). The following examples were all observed and collected through the years 2019-2021 in social network groups or pages, all related to the work sphere or daily life of Brazilians in Japan. They were posted by and/or turned to Dekasegi community members. An image of the original extract will always be introduced following a presentation of the example(s). Examples (2), (3) (4), and (5) were all present in a single advertisement and are shown here in *sic*[5]:

(2) Serviço de (*hanga*) ou montagem de roda de moto

(2a) Serviço de *fixação de autopeças em molde* ou montagem de rodas de moto.

(2b) Service for *placing auto parts in a template* or installation of motorcycle wheels.

(3) Turno: *hiru* ou *nikotai*

(3a) Turno: *diurno* ou *alternado*.

(3b) *Day* or *alternating* shift.

(4) *zanguio* 1 a 2hrs

(4a) *Hora extra*: de uma a duas horas.

(4b) *Overtime*: one to two hours.

(5) *nihongo* acima de 30%

(5a) Conhecimento de *língua japonesa* superior ao básico.

(5b) Higher than basics *Japanese language* knowledge.

[5] We opted to not collect direct information from individuals in these posts. In our examples, all information gathered was entirely of free access, which means that we needed no more than a Facebook account to visualize those jobs advertisements. Still for privacy and security reasons, we left out all possible personal data such as cellphones, names, QR codes, etc, that could eventually direct to it. For more details of our data collection methodology and further examples, see Dall'Ava (forthcoming Summer 2022).

Image 1 – examples (2), (3), (4), and (5)

Following the same vein *hanga*, *hiru*, *nikotai*, *zanguio* and *nihongo* are also words of Japanese origin employed as loanwords in Dekasegi Portuguese. As in the example (1) presented by Dias, these are loanwords from Japanese, which were adapted phonetically and orthographically to Portuguese, and are extensively adopted in this variety. It is traceable, for instance, an orthographic adaptation of the romanization system: words like *zanguio*/*zangyo*, *nikotai,* and *hanga* are spelled with no indication of a long vowel. It doesn't agree with stricter rules of a Hepburn system, as in *zangyō*, *nikōtai* and *hangā*, but it also doesn't follow a more forgiving system such as Waapuro style either, which there is no need to use diacritics, just add an extra vowel, as in *zangyou*, *nikoutai* and *hangaa*. Orthographic adaptations like these are related to phonetic-phonological adaptations (Vendelin and Peperkamp 2006; Kang 2011). Although long vowels are distinctive features in Japanese, they are certainly not in Portuguese. If we add to this evidence that the majority of these Brazilians don't have high proficiency skills in the Japanese language (Beltrão and Sugahara 2006), it is not surprising that these vowels don't emerge in such Japanese loanwords, when they finally reach Portuguese. It becomes clear that at least *a priori*, including extra unnoticeable vowels, wouldn't make much sense, since this missing isn't typically noticed by Portuguese speakers (Dall'Ava 2021).

Moreover, the word *zangyō* presents some orthographic instability, given that it might be spelled as *zangyo*, *zanguio*, or even as *zanguiyo* (Dias 2015). This alternation and lack of uniform spelling is a common characteristic of recent loanwords in a language (Torrano 2010; Antunes et al. 2012). Furthermore, even though our examples were collected in the written form, it is well documented in the literature that Japanese and Portuguese have quite distinct phonetic systems (Doi 1984; Joko 1987; Cristófaro-Silva 2002), so we may also make some assumptions regarding phonetic-phonological adaptions that might be distinctive

through writing. Dias (2015) already called attention to how Japanese loanwords are phonetic-phonologic adapted in Dekasegi Portuguese. The final vowel in a word like *zangyō* is pronounced as a long vowel in Japanese [dʒ̃ãŋʲgʲoː], but in Portuguese, a vowel duration isn't a distinctive feature, thus phonologically long vowels are no different from short vowels, and as a result, loanwords like this are at the most cases adapted to a stressed vowel [zãgiˈo] (cf. Richter and Agostinho 2017; Agostinho and Richter 2020). Additionally, these two authors have previously presented a list of Japanese loanwords in Portuguese with several examples distinguishing Portuguese and Japanese phonetic systems, stress and pronunciations. Relying on their findings and data, we may comprehend that a single grapheme such as ⟨n⟩, in a word like *nihon* (EN: Japan) is realized differently: uttered as [niˈhõ] by Portuguese speakers, and firstly representing a voiced alveolar nasal [n], and subsequently, indicated by a tilde marker [~], that is, the nasalization of the vowel [o] as [õ]; but pronounced as [ɲihoɴ] by their Japanese counterparts, at first as a voiced palatal nasal [ɲ], and then as a voiced uvular nasal sound [ɴ], both representing a consonant in this language. From our example (5), we may also infer that *nihongo* is also pronounced differently in those languages: as [ɲihõŋgo] in Japanese, but as [nihõˈgo] or [niˈhõgʊ] when adapted as a loanword in Portuguese[6]. Here is an extra example from our *corpus* to illustrate how orthographic adaptations may be affected by phonological ones in this variety:

(6) *Teidi* lá é de 7:54 minutos
  (6a) O *horário regular de trabalho* é de 7 horas e 54 minutos.
  (6b) *Regular work time* is 7 hours and 54 minutes.

[6] Regarding those two phonetic transcriptions readings, they are based on Portuguese phonotactics, the researcher linguistic intuition as a Portuguese speaker, and his own knowledge and contact with Brazilian community in Japan and Dekasegi Portuguese speech. Of course, to confirm (or refute) those readings, several samples have to be collected and further analyzed in software such as Praat (Styler 2021). See Agostinho and Richter (2020).

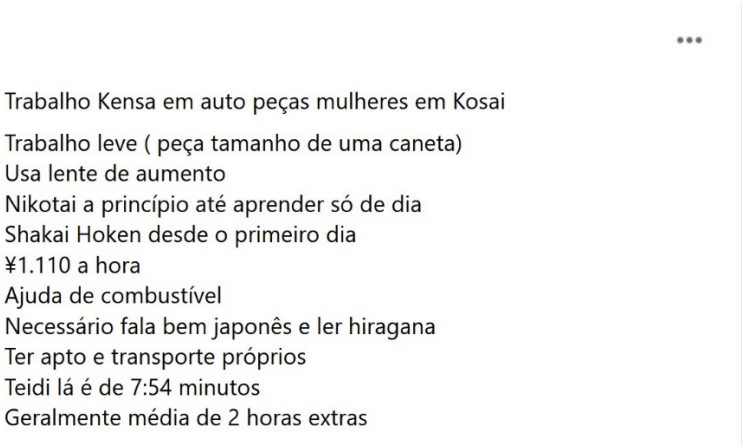

Image 2 – example (6)

Here we have the Japanese loanword *teiji* (JA: 定時), which in this example is spelled as *teidi* in Dekasegi Portuguese. In Japanese, the graphemes ⟨ji⟩ used in romanization systems of this language is commonly realized as [d͡ʑi], that is, a voiced alveolo-palatal affricate followed by a vowel. On the other hand, in certain Brazilian Portuguese varieties, especially in dialects spoken by most immigrants who have moved to Japan, such as those from the South and Southeast parts of Brazil (cf. Matsumoto and Okumura 2020a, 2020b), the graphemes ⟨di⟩ are usually realized as [d͡ʒi] or [d͡ʒɪ], namely, a voiced postalveolar affricate followed by a vowel. The segments [d͡ʑ] and [d͡ʒ] are somewhat similar, only slightly differentiating themselves by the place of articulation. Yet, in Portuguese, the grapheme ⟨j⟩ is realized as [ʒ], a voiced postalveolar fricative, which differentiates not only through the place, but also in the manner of articulation when compared to [d͡ʑ]. For a native Portuguese speaker without further knowledge of the romanization systems in Japanese, to resort to the graphemes ⟨ji⟩ in a word like *teiji* might seem a bit out of place, since, in this context, the perception of [d͡ʑ] leans towards [d͡ʒ] (cf. Paradis and Lebel 1994; Richter and Agostinho 2017), and not [ʒ], which deviates much more from the original Japanese pronunciation[7]. Therefore, this loanword undergoes an orthographic adaptation to *teidi*, which is more in line with the Portuguese spelling rules to represent the phone [d͡ʒ] as the grapheme ⟨d⟩. Apart from this, Vendelin and Peperkamp (2006) had previously drawn attention to differences in loanwords that were inserted through an oral speech from those that are introduced firstly through writing. In our context, we may

[7] It is known that [d͡ʑ] and [ʑ] are in free variation in word internal context in Japanese (Labrune 2012). Also, in our *corpus*, it is possible to detect the word *teiji* both spelled as ⟨teidi⟩, with the grapheme ⟨d⟩ representing the phone [d͡ʒ], and as ⟨teiji⟩, with the grapheme ⟨j⟩ representing the phone [ʒ], as two different possibilities in Dekasegi Portuguese. It is safe to assume that these two written forms might be pushed by the free variation in Japanese speech. Of course, to confirm this, other similar examples should be explored and further research must be addressed.

conclude that a word like this was most probably inserted in Dekasegi Portuguese through orality, and just afterward, reproduced and adapted to the written form on the Internet, for instance, in Facebook groups. The main reasons for believing this are related to the socioeconomic status and linguistic skills of Brazilians in Japan: in daily life and most jobs executed by them, such as the manufactory handwork, speaking skills are usually more advantageous than writing skills (cf. Tsuda 2003; Roncato 2013); also, as we previously addressed, most members of the Dekasegi community don't have extensive background knowledge in Standard Japanese, especially when we consider writing and reading abilities in this language (Beltrão and Sugahara 2006).

New words have also been attested in this variety, as Dias draw attention to the mixing of both Portuguese and Japanese morphological particles, which make use of a Japanese root with the addition of a Portuguese suffix (Dias 2015, 90):

(7) Ele vai ter que *gambatear* muito...
(7a) Ele vai ter que *se esforçar* muito...
(7b) He will have *to work* very *hard*...

Like all prior examples, *gambatear* doesn't bear meaning in Standard Brazilian Portuguese. *Gambatear* comes from *ganbatte* (JA: 頑張って), the conjunctive form of verb *ganbaru* (JA: 頑張る) meaning *to work hard* or *to do your best*. And also similar to the previous examples, this loanword is already adapted to the Portuguese spelling rules: this is indicated by the use of ⟨m⟩ instead of ⟨n⟩, and also deletion of a consonant gemination, another distinctive feature that is nonexistent in Portuguese, which is orthographically represented in a Japanese romanization system as ⟨tt⟩, and it is adapted to just ⟨t⟩ in Portuguese. Adjustments like this imply this word is thoroughly employed in this variety. Moreover, the suffix *-ar* is also added since it is one of the main verbal endings that produce infinitive in Portuguese. In this language, that is notably the case when dealing with neologisms through loanwords (Assirati 1998; Antero Alves 2013; Fujiwara 2014; Santos 2017; Ganança 2018; Timbane and Quiraque 2019). In our corpus, we also found words like *keizinhos* and *lifiteiros*, which in the same vein, make use of Portuguese and Japanese morphemes to compose a neologism[8].

When approaching Dekasegi Portuguese variety or Portuguese-Japanese language contact in general, there is a great concern with loanwords and neologisms, which are commonly regarded as the main feature that makes it distinguish itself, for example, from other varieties. That is notable in authors like Dias (2015) and Fujiwara (2014). These phenomena are, indeed, of huge

[8] For a complete analysis of these two loanwords, see Dall'Ava (2021).

importance to define this variety, need additional description, and certainly must be further addressed in the future (Dall'Ava forthcoming Summer 2022).

Still, Dekasegi Portuguese shouldn't be restrained only by lexical studies, since there are other linguistic features to approach and outline as well. Matsumoto and Okumura (2019a, 2019b, 2020a, 2020b) would bring the discussion to a wider scope, also considering other topics, such as the origin of Dekasegi Portuguese, alongside phonological and orthographical elements. According to them, the Portuguese language employed in Japan is influenced mostly by immigrants coming from the South and Southeast Brazilian regions. Following the koiné studies of Trudgill (1986) and Trudgill et al. (2000), these varieties might be understood as passing through a merging or mixture: a process of reduction in variation (leveling), which culminate in crystallization of a new Portuguese language variety (focusing) in Japan. They also draw attention to the orthography: Portuguese might be written using standard Roman characters, but, likewise, hiragana and katakana alphabets may be employed, especially, in the case of Brazilian children literate in the Japanese orthography, but not in the Roman alphabet (Matsumoto and Okumura, 2020b). However, one of their most astonishing findings is a phonological one. These authors reported noticeable innovations and rearrangement of the rhotic paradigm system in Dekasegi Portuguese, headed by the emergence of a new phonetic segment, a voiceless bilabial fricative [ɸ]: a xenolectal feature (Roche 1998; Timm 2000; Mufwene 2008), a phone originally absent in Brazilian Portuguese varieties, but present in Japanese in words like *fuji* [ɸɯʑi] or *futon* [ɸɯtõɴ][9]. Features like these would be particularly noticeable in those individuals who were born in Japan or lived most of their lives quite far away from their parents' homeland (Matsumoto and Okumura 2020a).

Some other elements are present in this variety, and we wish to highlight them. Besides the most obvious influences of Brazilian Portuguese and Japanese varieties, Dekasegi Portuguese is also under the influence of Spanish and Tagalog: languages of other Latin Americans and Filipinos fellows, which commonly live on similar employment circumstances and interact with Brazilians in the professional or personal level. The blending factor and closeness are well-known within these groups, with a significant level of integration (Vilog 2011; Matsumoto and Okumura 2020b). This is especially true regarding the other Latin Americans, considering the cultural and linguistic barriers are milder in comparison to other groups living in Japan. Nikkei Peruvians, Argentines, and Bolivians are, virtually, all native Spanish speakers, and Spanish and Portuguese are both Romance languages with a high intelligibility level between its speakers (Jensen 1989; Margolis 1994; Gooskens et al. 2018). Therefore, in addition to their socioeconomic

[9] For further discussions about the inclusion of segment [ɸ] in Dekasegi Portuguese and implications to its rhotic system, see Matsumoto and Okumura (2020a, 2020b) and Dall'Ava (2021).

experience being somewhat similar, there are also cultural and linguistic elements that, ultimately, converge bringing them closer in the Japanese context (Lange 2013). In line with it, we can indicate some attested examples, contexts in which this contact have occurred: a) it is not rare to find Latin American families, being a parent from Brazil and the other from Peru, with a child born and raised in Japan (Lagones Valdez 2016); b) Spanish speaking Latin Americans conveniently making use of Portuguese instead of Spanish to find job advertisements or getting better access to resources in Japan (Takenaka 2009a)[10]; c) Peruvians leaning to learn Portuguese since it is an easier linguistic asset to grasp or master when compared to Japanese (Rácz 2019). It is not rare to rely on the language of a group with common cultural background, even if it is a minority language. For instance, quite opposite to the Japanese context and dynamics, Brazilians are the ones who frequently learn and resort to Spanish in USA cities with huge Hispanic immigration influx, such as Miami (Carter and Lynch 2015), Los Angeles (Beserra 2005), and New York (Margolis 1994).

We would also add, to a lesser extent, the contact with other foreign groups and languages, especially, of those individuals that might fit into a similar Dekasegi reality in Japan, and which likely have a greater opportunity to interact with Brazilians in work or daily life, such as Koreans, Chinese, Indonesians, and Thai (Shipper 2002; Córdova Quero 2009; Vilog 2011).

In general, we could say that the origins and development of Dekasegi Portuguese might be assigned to the contact between different language varieties of Portuguese in distinct sociolinguistic levels: Japanese-Brazilian Portuguese as a sociolect or ethnolect, South and Southeast Brazilian Portuguese dialects, and Standard Brazilian Portuguese as an acrolect or standard language. Besides that, we must consider the contact with other languages in Japan: mainly Japanese, but, possibly, also other foreign immigrant languages such as Spanish, Tagalog, and so on. In sum, the language spoken by the Brazilian Dekasegi community may be understood as (adapted from Dall'Ava 2021, 147):

> Dekasegi Portuguese – a variety or a set of varieties[11] of Portuguese language employed by members of the Brazilian Dekasegi community and developed

[10] Given that Brazilians represent ¾ of the Latin Americans in Japan, Peruvians and other Latin American Spanish speaking groups might be considered minorities within minorities *vis-à-vis* its Brazilian fellows. For a broad view of minorities within minorities notion, see Eisenberg and Spinner-Halev (2005). For further discussions about this concept, see Madibbo (2006).

[11] Matsumoto and Britain (2020) draw attention making a distinction to what they call Dekasegi-go and Brazilian Portuguese immigrant koiné. We believe that these two phenomena might just be different facets of a similar language contact. The first one more focused in the lexicon and word formation, and the last one more related to phonetic-phonological changes, yet both immersed in the same social context. Of course, further research must be addressed to confirm this. Still, in this

> through constant and diglossic language contact with Japanese, and to a lesser extent with Spanish, Tagalog, and other foreign languages in Japan.

By now, we already comprehend that Dekasegi Portuguese presents a set of idiosyncrasies: a) it has its vocabulary, words mostly represented by adapted loanwords from Japanese; b) developed its own set of grammatical features, for instance, the phone [ɸ], which is not present in other Portuguese varieties, affecting and rearranging its rhotic system; c) it is employed by a certain social/ethnic group, the Dekasegi.

Henceforward, we will consider it as a variety of Portuguese developed by the Brazilian Dekasegi community. Still, what kind of variety are we dealing with? In the next section, some fundamentals related to the sociolect concept will be presented, for then, in the following section, we will advocate to address it as a sociolect.

What is a sociolect?

When we are dealing with variation in Sociolinguistics, we consider that languages may vary according to distinct variables and contexts. Just to name a few, we could consider variation regarding age, gender, timeframe, region, prestige, wealth, social or ethnic group, and correlate it with different levels of language, such as lexicon, phonology, or syntax (Schilling-Estes 2013). In general, when there is a set of linguistic items in variation within a language in similar distribution, we call it a lect or a variety (Eifring and Theil 2005). Following this reasoning, for example, Standard British English (Received Pronunciation), African-American Vernacular English (AAVE), and Western Australian English are all varieties of English.

When dealing with language varieties, we may place certain variables or contexts in the spotlight. For instance, if we are managing to mainly focus on how social aspects are attached to linguistic elements and on the social dimension of a language variety, then we will call it a sociolect. Sometimes known as a social-class dialect (Trudgill 2003), social dialect (Durrell 2004), or social variety (Wolfram 2004), a sociolect might be described as (Durrell 2004, 204):

> […] a descriptive convenience to indicate that the speech of a particular group is being studied with particular reference to the dimension of social stratification [...] In this way, a sociolect is effectively a set of variants which may be associated with a particular group and which may be accepted by that group as identifying it.

paper, we will treat these two as being part of the same set of Portuguese language varieties developed in Japan, henceforward, designated as Dekasegi Portuguese.

A sociolect might also be correlated to social hierarchy, status, and power (Wolfram 2004), and might be understood as a type or subcategory of a variety (Southerland 1997; Trudgill 2003). Also, Lewandowski (2010) points out that, to a smaller or greater extent, every sociolect makes use of common terminology, which is at least in a first moment only understood by the members of a specific community.

Moreover, according to Lewandowski (2010), roughly based on Grabias (1994), sociolects might be organized in a typology. In these works, there are two main concepts, which guide us to identify a sociolect: Professionalism as "the usefulness of linguistic devices in the professional activity of the group", whereas Expressiveness is described as "means of conveying attitudes to extra-linguistic reality" (Lewandowski 2010, 62). Usually, these categories are exclusionary, thus professional sociolects are distinct and diverge from expressive ones, although they still might hold characteristics from each another.

For instance, from the three examples of language varieties previously presented in this section, AAVE is commonly and reasonably examined as a sociolect, since several grammatical and lexical items are associated and accepted as part of the social and linguistic context of a certain social group[12] (Southerland 1997), in this case, mostly by working- and middle-class African American and African Canadians (Edwards 2004). Additionally, under the presented typology, AAVE is better represented as an expressive sociolect, given that new words and meanings aren't exclusively coined to fill lexical gaps, but it rather covers language attitude (cf. Lewandowski 2010; Giles and Rakić 2014; Dragojevic 2017).

This doesn't mean, however, that the study of sociolects will only consider social aspects or how language elements associate exclusively with them. Even when we are within the boundaries of the same sociolect, there will be variation subjected to other parameters, beyond just social class, such as gender, formal education, timeframe, and age (Louwerse 2004; Wolfram 2004; Oushiro 2015). In sum, as it is the common praxis of sociolinguistic studies when dealing with sociolects, other variables and contexts are relevant and considered as well, although the focus is generally regarded to social features.

Is Dekasegi Portuguese a sociolect?

In the previous sections, we already presented some features of Dekasegi Portuguese, indicating lexical and phonological variation evidence to Standard Brazilian Portuguese, and advocated for it as a Portuguese language variety. In

[12] AAVE is either classified as a sociolect (Berthele 2000; Wallaert 2005; Prastitasari 2013) and/or as an ethnolect (Eckert 2008; Dorleijn and Nortier 2013).

this section, we will take one more step, claiming it to be a specific kind of language variety, arguing and supporting the idea to address it as a sociolect. To reach that goal, it is fundamental to thoroughly comprehend not only the Dekasegi background context, as we saw in the previous sections but also other aspects regarding their current status in Japan, such as labor and household.

In the Dekasegi community, the household congregates at least one family member who has Japanese ancestry (Nikkei), accompanied by their spouse and offspring. Virtually, they represent the vast majority of Brazilians in Japan[13]. Traditionally, these Brazilians are associated with manufactory work under temporary contracts and commonly live in Danchis (low-cost apartment clusters) together with other Latin Americans, sometimes, including other foreigners and locals. They also might be associated with the service sector (restaurants, supermarkets, hairdresser, so on), which, at least in a first moment, could only be developed by and due to the already previously established Brazilian immigration network in Japan (Roncato 2013); howsoever, they are rarely represented by technicians or highly skilled workers (Beltrão and Sugahara 2006). In sum, this population comes from a similar socioeconomic and cultural background in Brazil (Costa 2007), is hired as a cheap workforce in Japan (Sasaki 2009b), and there is frequent contact between its members, either in person when living in the same or nearby neighborhoods (Shoji 2008; Mita et al. 2008), at work such as in manufacturing lines (Tsuda 2003), or through online social networks (Dall'Ava 2021). In a broad sense and at least in Japan, we might consider the Dekasegi as members of the same social class (Roncato 2013, 2020). Also, between them, there is a strong sense of belonging to a certain group within the Japanese context, for instance, as Dekasegi, Nikkei, or Brazilian; a sense which is commonly taken as a matter of pride (Oliveira 1997; Carvalho 2003; Tsuda 2003; Birello and Lessa 2008; Sasaki 2009a, 2009b; Sakai 2010).

Considering all those social elements, and also adding to the linguistic component as presented in the previous sections, such as the relevance of Japanese loanwords, neologisms mixing Japanese roots with Portuguese affixes, the

[13] It is hard to tell the number of Brazilians who migrate to Japan who aren't Nikkei, or somewhat, akin to them, given that the Japanese government (Statistics Bureau of Japan 2021) don't gather direct information regarding ethnicity of their migrants. Still, according to Roncato (2013) from the 230k Brazilians in Japan back in 2010, 200k (~87%) were visa holders by ties of consanguinity, which means, roughly, that the other 30k (~13%) weren't individuals related to the Dekasegi movement. The Consulate General of Brazil in Tokyo (2021) suggest an even lower percentage participation of these non-Nikkei Brazilians. Thus, it is safe to assume that these individuals should represent a small minority of Brazilians in Japan, since there are no incentives for non-Nikkei Latin Americans to immigrate to Japan (Ministry of Justice of Japan 2019). Furthermore, these Brazilians aren't necessarily connected to the employment strings commonly attached to the Dekasegi reality (cf. Roncato 2013), and therefore, *a priori*, shouldn't be assigned as Dekasegi Portuguese speakers.

emergence of a new phone, and reorganization of the rhotic system, besides the influence and intense contact with other foreign languages; we consider all that corroborates to regard this variety broadly employed by Brazilians in Japan, namely Dekasegi Portuguese, as a sociolect.

In this sense, acknowledging different sociolinguistic elements that we may emphasize in a variety, we believe Dekasegi Portuguese distinctness mainly comes from its social component. It differs, for instance, from Paulistano Portuguese (Mendes and Oushiro 2012) and Caipira Portuguese (Azevedo 1984), Brazilian Portuguese dialects, which the region is usually taken as the common variable between its speakers. It also differs from other sociolects, such as Popular Brazilian Portuguese (Holm 1987), in which the language prestige[14] is the main element in focus. As we previously mentioned, typically, Dekasegi Portuguese speakers come from a similar socio-cultural background in Brazil, face similar socioeconomic problems, practice similar jobs and represent the same social class in Japan (Yamanaka 1996; Roncato 2013, 2020).

Still, we could argue that the Dekasegi community does hold some ethnic elements, since it is quite common for Brazilians in Japan to be descendants of previous Japanese influx to South America, especially, from those individuals that headed to Brazil in the first half of the 20th century (Kono 2001; Costa 2007). Therefore, in principle, we could also consider Dekasegi Portuguese as an ethnolect. Yet, not all Dekasegi Brazilians are of Japanese ancestry: Nikkei spouses, for instance, may not hold Japanese ancestry (Beltrão and Sugahara 2006). Therefore, we consider that the link between its members in Japan is much more social or cultural than ethnical, and Dekasegi Portuguese should be regarded and analyzed as a sociolect since it is associated with the speech of a particular group, the Dekasegi, evaluated through the social stratification dimension of Brazilian and Japanese socioeconomic context (cf. Tsuda 2003; Durrell 2004; Costa 2007; Newland 2009; Roncato 2013). Also, as expected in a sociolect, social aspects are intrinsically connected to linguistic elements. According to Lewandowski (2010, 63):

> Every sociolect to a smaller or larger extent contains terminology[15] which is incomprehensible to non-members of the social group which has generated that

[14] Still, there is different linguistic perceptions and valuation between Dekasegi Portuguese and Standard Brazilian Portuguese. See Dias (2015).

[15] The word 'terminology' is employed here in a broad sense. It is not restricted 'to provide a theoretical structure which will permit the compilation of correct and verifiable terminologies', but much rather 'to refer to the body of terms particular to some discipline or technology' (Cole, 1987). As employed by Lewandowski (2010), it should either be understood as a 'lexical repertoire of a sociolect' or a 'sociolectal vocabulary'. I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out on this matter and requiring further clarification.

> sociolect. In some social dialects their users may deliberately code information to make it inaccessible or incomprehensible to outsiders. Other varieties include words and phrases which may just be hardly communicative to ordinary people; however, their incomprehensibility is by no means intentional.

As we previously saw, Dekasegi Portuguese is full of words that deviate from Portuguese varieties and, at least in a first moment and without supplementary explanations, are either unrecognizable or incomprehensible to speakers of other varieties. Still, throughout examples (1) to (7), the initial struggle that most Portuguese speakers face when dealing for the first time with words like *zangyō*, *nikōtai, teiji,* or *gambatear* is by no means something intentional by their Dekasegi Portuguese fellows. It is due to differences in social-economical context and background and how these words are employed to portray this distinct reality.

Lastly, if we apply Grabias' (1994) and Lewandowski's (2010) typology to this variety, we are more prone to classify it through the professionalism spectrum, since much of Dekasegi Portuguese vocabulary developed as a result of the professional activities of Brazilians in Japan. Most loanwords provided in this paper confirm this point. We wouldn't, though, totally reject possible expressiveness elements, since they can also be employed as means of validation, acceptance, or belonging to a group (Oliveira 1997; Tsuda 2003; Dall'Ava 2021), or to exhibit certain social status (Dias 2015).

In the following and closing section, we will present our final thoughts regarding Dekasegi Portuguese as a variety and sociolect.

Final remarks

In line with previous works in the literature (Dias 2015; Matsumoto and Okumura 2020b; Dall'Ava 2021), we presented throughout this paper a range of arguments that endorse the speech of Brazilians in Japan, Dekasegi Portuguese, as an emerging variety of Portuguese language. We also took one step further, addressing it as a specific kind of variety, claiming it to be a sociolect.

To support such an argument, we followed a sociolinguistic outline, presenting both linguistic elements (orthographic adjustments, phonetic-phonological adaptations, neologisms through Japanese and Portuguese morpheme combination) and social aspects (background and current socio-economical context) of the Brazilian Dekasegi community in Japan and Brazil. We also discussed how some of these features are related, which sustain and corroborates our view.

Ultimately, we hope this analysis contributes to the Brazilian migration studies, especially, in the East Asian context. We expect to shed light on the

discussion of the Portuguese language in Japan, beyond its straightforward association with the Brazilian community, including its role as both a job and daily language in virtual and in-person interaction by the Latin American community (Takenaka 2009a; Rácz 2019, Dall'Ava 2021). Likewise, for future works that will investigate this subject, we hope to have drawn enough attention to the language change process happening both in grammar and vocabulary, a regular process particularly expected in the formation of a new language variety such as Dekasegi Portuguese (cf. Trudgill 1986; Kerswill 2002; Lamanna 2012; Matsumoto and Okumura 2020b), a phenomenon which was certainly driven by the contact and influence of different Brazilian Portuguese dialects and other languages, mainly, Japanese[16].

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Felipe Dall'Ava currently is a teacher assistant and a Ph.D. candidate in Applied Linguistics at the Department of Portuguese, University of Macau, Macau S.A.R., China. He is focused on phenomena involving language contact and change in Portuguese. He is especially interested in linguistic variation produced by Brazilians through and owing to their migration movements.
Contact: felipemdalava@gmail.com

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