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# Forms of address in São Paulo

## A historical approach

**Abstract:** This chapter<sup>1</sup> presents a study of the forms of address found in databases of letters written in São Paulo during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The data are analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively, considering aspects such as the gender of those involved in the epistolary relationship, date, exclusive or mixed use of a form, relationship between sender and recipient, as well as pragmatics. In the 18th century correspondence, there is widespread use of *vossa mercê* (lit. ‘Your Mercy’) precisely in the region which later on will be characterized by the exclusive use of *você*. In the 19th and 20th century letters, *você* shows up with greater frequency than *tu*. The results show a higher frequency of *você* in the period studied here, foreshadowing the subsystem of address forms currently used in the state of São Paulo.

**Keywords:** forms of address, *vossa mercê*, historical linguistics, philology

## 1 Introduction

The history of forms of address in Portuguese is particularly interesting because of the widespread use of the form *você*, especially in Brazil. Much recent research focuses on the geographical distribution of *você* across the vast Brazilian territory (Lopes et al. 2018; Scherre et al. 2015). In the regions historically influenced by the Captaincy of São Paulo, *você* occurs practically alone as the unique second person pronoun (Monte 2015). Even in localities in which *você* competes with *tu*, *você* is also becoming the preferred form. In these places, it seems that *tu* has become prevalent during certain periods for socio-historical reasons.

The collective efforts to research the history of Brazilian Portuguese have had many positive outcomes, including a common methodology for the diachronic

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investigation of address forms. Thanks to recent studies, it is possible today to compare data on this topic in several different Brazilian states. These studies are enabling us to develop a comprehensive historical narrative of address forms in Brazil, from at least the 18th century to the present day (Lopes et al. 2018). In this chapter, we adopt this common research methodology, generating comparable data regarding a broader history, not only related to São Paulo, but to Brazil more widely. Starting from reliable scholarly editions of letters, we analyze the period from 1870 to 1949.

Investigating the history behind the spread of *você* in Portuguese America<sup>2</sup> may help elucidate the Brazilian Portuguese pronoun system, which differs considerably from that of European Portuguese.

The first obstacle to this historical approach lies in the source material. The form *vossa mercê* (lit. ‘Your Mercy’)<sup>3</sup> and its correlated phonological reductions (such as *vossemecê*, *vosmecê*, *vossuncê*, *vossancê*) are rarely documented in old texts, where we find that *vossa mercê*, more often than not, is abbreviated. There is a large list of possible abbreviations, using only the initials (V. M.) or the initials combined with the other letters (V. M<sup>ce</sup>), as we will see later (it is also important to mention that the use of capital letters as initials was not mandatory at that time, so that it is very common to find forms of address written entirely in lowercase letters).<sup>4</sup> The conventional editorial approach in the semi-diplomatic editions is to insert full forms into the abbreviations used in the original manuscripts, as part of the editors’ efforts to amend and elucidate the originals – a technique that is used not only in the corpus under study here (to be described below), but also in all corpora used for research on address forms that we are aware of.<sup>5</sup> In this

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<sup>2</sup> Portuguese America refers to the area colonized by the Portuguese from 1500 to 1822.

<sup>3</sup> In this chapter we prefer to use the literal translation *Your Mercy*, for two main reasons: (1) this translation is frequent in the specialized literature about forms of address (e.g. Pharies 2015 and Hualde, Olarrea & O’Rourke 2012); (2) the expression was used in Middle English (e.g. Barratt 2010: 240 and *Middle English Dictionary* 2014) with the exact same value that it had in Medieval Portuguese, from which it specialized as a form of address. In English, though, the preferred form was “Your Grace”.

<sup>4</sup> In this chapter, we opted to write forms of address using lowercase, unless the capital letters were used by the original manuscript’s scribe.

<sup>5</sup> “Semi-diplomatic” is a format of scholarly edition that seeks to reproduce most of the features of an original (spelling, punctuation, etc.), while changing a few aspects, such as the abbreviations. Although they differ from “diplomatic” editions in a few aspects – notably, abbreviations are not developed by the editor in diplomatic transcriptions – semi-diplomatic editions are still considered conservative approaches to the original text, and constitute the most widely used format of scholarly edition for corpora that are destined for historical linguistic studies, at least within Portuguese historical linguistics.

approach, importantly, the full forms inserted (for example, V<ossa> M<ercê > where an original scribe used V.M. or V. M<sup>ce</sup>) are mere conventions by the editors of the texts, derived from their philological criteria. Crucially, this means that it is almost impossible to pursue the written history of the form that, according to previous research, gave rise to the pronoun *você*.

This chapter intends to investigate the forms of address found in letters produced between the 18th and 20th centuries in São Paulo. The research includes three historical periods of the current “Estado de São Paulo”:

- Letters from 1722 to 1809: Captaincy of São Paulo (Colonial period)
- Letters from 1844 to 1889: Province of São Paulo (Imperial period)
- Letters from 1890 to 1953: Estado de São Paulo (Republic of Brazil period)

Based on philological editions of letters from the 18th to the 20th centuries, this chapter aims to answer the following questions: (a) how were the forms *tu* and *você* distributed in São Paulo?; (b) was the form *você* always the most frequent?; and (c) how do the results compare to those of other studies of Brazilian letters from other parts of the country? The chapter is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the *corpora*, and Sections 3 and 4 present the data analysis according to century, followed by a discussion of the results.

## 2 The corpora

Letters are one of the most common types of texts for researching forms of address from a diachronic perspective (Lopes 2012, Marcotulio 2010, Rumeu 2013). They are documents in which one can easily identify the interlocution process in which the linguistic forms are used. Among these forms, it is very usual to find specific forms of address. Besides their constitutive characteristics, letters also offer the possibility of investigating the sender and recipient relationship, and, depending on the data available, it is possible to gather some sociolinguistic information, which adds to the analysis of the forms of address.

Recently, there have been several initiatives to prepare scholarly editions based on documents produced in Portuguese America (1500–1822) and in Brazil (after 1822), as a result of comprehensive projects about the history of Brazilian Portuguese. The first initiative, started during the 1990s, was the Project for the History of Brazilian Portuguese (also known as PHPB), later subdivided into a series of regional projects, such as the Project for the History of Paulista Portuguese (also known as PHPP). The editions used in this chapter are all outcomes from the PHPP and are published on the project website (<http://phpp.fflch.usp.br/corpus>).

The *corpus* used for this chapter is composed as follows:

- (1) From the 18th century and the first decade of 19th century, there are two series of documents:
  - Letters from Public Administration: 1765–1775 (Monte 2015)
  - Indigenous settlement: 1722–1809 (Kewitz & Simões 2006)<sup>6</sup>

There are several challenges when dealing with documents of this period. The first is the difficulty of establishing the private or public context of the letters – we will come to the other challenges in Section 3. Considering the rich socio-historical context of Portuguese America, where relations could be public and private simultaneously, the public circulation of documents is a key element in determining their more or less public status (Barbosa 1999).

The Public Administration letters from the period of Morgado de Mateus' government in the Captaincy of São Paulo (1765–1775) circulated publicly. They involve aspects of the public administration of the territory, such as crime (defense, complaint, investigation or caution), financial topics (tax collection, debt or account settling) and conscription. The majority of the letters were written by army officers and soldiers, and local administration officials in diverse captaincies. In most cases, the soldiers wrote to one another or to the local administrators. Monte (2015) made an in-depth study of the senders and found that at least 32 documents (out of 81) were written, or dictated, by men born in Portuguese America, mainly in the São Paulo Captaincy. We are thus able to assume that the documents are authentic records of the language that would later give rise to Brazilian Portuguese.

The letters relating to the creation of villages for the Indigenous peoples, where they could be controlled and exploited by the metropole, were written by priests to their superiors or to the army officers. The topics range from the enlistment of Indigenous people to particular episodes that occurred in the villages, which were all close to São Paulo. These letters are considered to pertain to private administration. Their semi-diplomatic edition was prepared and published by Kewitz & Simões (2006).

- (2) The 19th century includes three series of private documentation:
  - Correspondence received by Washington Luís: 1897–1900 (Kewitz & Simões 2005/2006)
  - Collection of “Clube Republicano”: 1883–1889 (Simões 2007)
  - Private correspondence of the Rafael Tobias de Aguiar archive: 1844–1890 (Módolo & Marques 2010)

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<sup>6</sup> This series also includes four letters from the 19th century, dated 1801, 1804 and 1809. These letters were included in the 18th century period, as the letters from the 19th century all dated from the last quarter of the century.

Washington Luís was the last Brazilian president (1926–1930) of the period known as the Old Republic. Despite being born in the city of Macaé (in Rio de Janeiro), he spent most of his life in São Paulo, where he held many public positions. In 1900, Washington Luís married Sophia Oliveira de Barros, a member of a wealthy family from São Paulo. The letters in this collection involve his mother-in-law, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, as well as other important people from São Paulo. The semi-diplomatic edition of the letters, followed by an in-depth historical study, was prepared by Kewitz & Simões (2006).

The missives in the Collection of “Clube Republicano” were written between 1883 and 1889 by important politicians from the Province of São Paulo. They are samples of private correspondence, and are part of the corpus that Simões analyzed in his PhD thesis (2007).

The private correspondence of the Rafael Tobias de Aguiar archive includes letters edited by Módolo & Marques (2010), addressed to him. All the letters were produced in the cities of São Paulo and Santos.

- (3) From the 20th century, the following sets of documentation were used:
- Family Letters of Washington Luís: 1901–1950 (Kewitz 2016)
  - Correspondence of Fernando and Julio Prestes de Albuquerque to Washington Luís: 1909–1932 (Kewitz, Ferreira & Albuquerque 2015)
  - Correspondence of the Junqueira Family: 1900–1953.

The first set involves the same people as the 19th century set to Washington Luís, Despite being written in a familiar register, they also deal with business, since most of the family was also involved in politics.

The second set involves Fernando Prestes and his son, Julio Prestes, who were two important figures in the history of São Paulo, and were exiled to Europe with Washington Luís after 1930. The letters and postcards were all written by Fernando and Julio to Washington. They are considered to be private administration letters and the scholarly edition was published by Kewitz, Ferreira & Albuquerque (2015).

The third set, which is not yet published, contains some family letters and private administration missives from a very important family called Junqueira, from Ribeirão Preto (São Paulo). Besides the letters sent within the family, we also find interesting letters written by the farm administration to the owner.<sup>7</sup>

The following sections provide an analysis of data from each time period.

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7 The edition of these letters is being prepared by the author of this chapter.

### 3 18th century: The history of an abbreviation

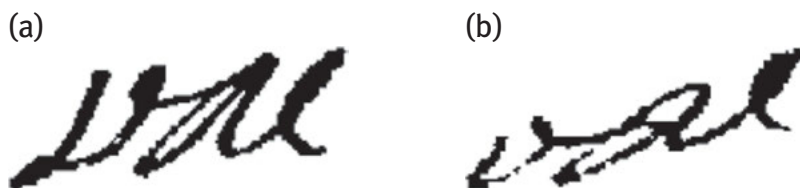
When dealing with letters written by famous people from the past, it is straightforward to gather data about them. From a diachronic perspective, public letters written by well-known people use honorific address forms, such as *vossa excelência* ('Your Excellency') and *vossa senhoria* ('Your Lordship/Ladyship'). We are interested in changes in pronominal address, and the form that we are looking for is *vossa mercê*, which probably gave rise to the present-day form *você* via grammaticalization. The letters sent to less eminent people are more likely to have this less honorific form. Besides the difficulty of getting information about ordinary people living in Portuguese America (such as birthplace, birthdate, level of education), it is also harder to find these kinds of documents. They were considered less important and therefore less likely to be conserved than documents that circulated within high administration.

After extensive searches in Brazilian and European archives and with the precious documentation in hand, our research of address forms, mainly *vossa mercê*, meets its second challenge. The full form is not attested, which means that we are researching an abbreviation, commonly *v.m.* or *v.m.<sup>e</sup>*. The supposed grammaticalized forms, the phonological reductions *vossemecê* and *vassuncê*, were mentioned by researchers at the beginning of 20th century (Basto 1931; Nogueira 1927; Amaral 1955), and they seem to have not been used in earlier written documents.

The development of the *v.m.* abbreviation is a convention. The full form is generally *vossa mercê* (following a quite general rule of using italics for the letters omitted in the manuscript). However, it is important to remember that we are studying an abbreviation of an address form, not the whole address form in the manuscript. This observation necessarily leads to a philological approach to the topic.

Identifying an abbreviation correctly is not always a simple task. It requires accurate paleographical observation of the handwriting to detect the letters used by the scribe. Monte (2015) has shown some similarities between the abbreviation of *vossa senhoria* and that of *vossa mercê*. The images in Figure 1 illustrate two abbreviations found on letters dating from the 18th century.

The abbreviation in (1a) is clearly an abbreviation of the form *vossa mercê*, since one easily identifies the capital letters "V" and "M", which were drawn without taking the quill pen off the paper. The second abbreviation, in (1b), by contrast, is harder to identify. At a first glance, it seems to have three letters: a "v", probably an "S", which is followed by an "e". If we read it like this, we will



**Figure 1:** Abbreviations of forms of address.

probably interpret it as an abbreviation of the form *vossa senhoria*. However, after an accurate paleographical analysis, Monte (2015: 236) proves that what appears to be the letters “S” and “e” are actually the capital letter “M”, which was badly drawn by the scribe. It is clear, then, that problems can arise from a misinterpretation of an abbreviated form of address, and great care is needed in correctly identifying them.

In the 105 letters<sup>8</sup> dating from the 18th century, we found an expressive use of *vossa mercê*, in both symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships. Table 1

**Table 1:** Forms of address in letters from 1722 to 1809.

Forms of address	Number of letters	Percentage
<i>vossa mercê</i>	68	65%
<i>vossa excelência</i>	25	24%
<i>vossa senhoria</i>	8	7%
<i>vossa reverendíssima</i> (‘Your Most Reverend’)	3	3%
<i>vossa majestade</i> (‘Your Majesty’)	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>105 letters</b>	<b>100%</b>

shows that the frequency of *vossa mercê* is very high (65%). Its use is related to the socio-professional category of the recipient (Monte 2015). The form is used in almost all situations inside the military hierarchy: when a soldier writes to his superior, when he writes to another soldier and when the superior writes to the soldier. It is important to note that the forms are abbreviated in 100% of cases.

<sup>8</sup> We also included two documents that have a structure very similar to a letter, but their proper diplomatic classification is official letter and mandate (Monte 2015).

Using their full forms is a general convention, based on the edition criteria commonly used in Brazil.

According to Marcilio (1974) and Bacelar (2009), the Captaincy of São Paulo was made up of poor people, farmers, businessmen with low resources, and artisans. In the 18th century, rural property was used for establishing people's social condition. It was only the men with land who were of interest to the metropole administration, as they were the ones who held military rank. The most elevated military positions were occupied by men who had more land and preferably had been born in the village. These local people address their equals in the letters with *vossa mercê*.

Based on the hypothesis of a socio-professional constraint on the choice of address forms, Monte (2015) developed the framework shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Socio-professional categories and their preferred forms of address.

Socio-professional category	Preferred form of address
Local administration	<i>vossa mercê</i>
Military people	
Common clergymen (priests)	
General administration (high status)	<i>vossa excelência</i> and <i>vossa senhoria</i> <i>vossa majestade</i> (king)
Clergymen – high positions	<i>vossa excelência (reverendíssima)</i> <i>vossa senhoria</i> <i>vossa reverendíssima</i>

The local administrators were all men of the countryside, born in Portuguese America. They occupied positions as local judges, chief guards and other officials. The military staff and the priests were also local people, normally born in the colonial villages of the São Paulo Captaincy. When addressing their equals in writing, they would choose the form *vossa mercê*, regardless of the position they occupied within the hierarchy.

The general administration, composed almost entirely of Portuguese, was normally designated by those administrators very close to the monarch. They were both addressed and addressed their equals with the more honorific forms *vossa excelência* and *vossa senhoria*. In the only letter addressed to the king, the form exclusively used was *vossa majestade*.

The high positions occupied by clergymen were always marked with highly honorific forms, varying from *vossa reverendíssima* and its variations (*vossa excelência reverendíssima*) to the use of *vossa excelência*.



As the data show, at this time there was a solid socio-professional constraint that seems to regulate the choice of address forms. The documents from this period circulated publicly, so we do not have samples of intimate communication, which explains the complete absence of the second person pronoun *tu*.

## 4 19th and 20th centuries: competition between *tu* and *você* and the victory of *você*

The period under scrutiny in this section is 1870 to 1949.<sup>9</sup> In the documents listed in Section 2 for this period, the following aspects were analyzed: a) the form of address in subject position; b) the sender's gender; c) social relations.

### 4.1 Subject position

Regarding the subject position data, we find a clear prevalence of *você*, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Forms of address in subject position.

Form of address in subject position	Number and %
<i>tu</i>	75/244 – 31%
<i>você</i>	142/244 – 58%
<i>o senhor</i> 'sir'	22/244 – 9%
<i>vossa senhoria</i>	3/244 – 1%
<i>vossa excelência</i>	2/244 – 1%

The majority of the occurrences concern the form *você* (58%), which may appear abbreviated by “V.” or developed, as we can see in Figures 2, 3 and 4.

<sup>9</sup> The last decade of the 19th century (1890–1899) is represented by only two letters, which may affect the results, as we will discuss later.

P.S. Acho que deves aproveitar  
a estadia em Petropolis para  
descançar de verdade - É um  
reposo que Voce merece.

**Figure 2:** Letter from João Alves de Lima to Washington Luís (10 February 1927).

*Transcription made by Verena Kewitz and Cássio de Albuquerque (Kewitz 2016 – Letter 157):*

P.S. Acho que deves aproveitar  
a estadia em Petropolis para  
descançar de verdade - É um  
reposo que Voce merece.

'I think [you] should take advantage of [your] stay in Petropolis to rest properly – it is a repose  
you deserve'

Querera' voce agir no sentido de  
que te fallo?

**Figure 3:** Letter from João Alves de Lima to Washington Luís (10 January 1929).

*Transcription made by Verena Kewitz and Cássio de Albuquerque (Kewitz 2016 – Letter 154):*

Querera' voce agir no sentido de  
que te fallo?

'Will you wish to act in the way [I] speak of to you?'

Hoje escrevi a Papai contando o que  
você passou uma mesinha comigo, actualmente, me é de todo  
impossivel sair de casa com tantos filhos, caso ele fosse  
você de um quilinho, estou com tanta saudade! e  
não vivo em condições de ir, você me escreva a  
breve de qualquer modo, pois para mim uma boa de  
da gente....

**Figure 4:** Letter to Mario Pereira Lima from his sister (19 January 1932).

figure 4 (continued)

*Transcription:*

Hoje escrevi a Papai convidando-o para  
vir passar uns mezes commigo, actualmente, me é de todo  
impossivel sahir de casa com tantos filhos, caso elle poss[a]  
vir, você dê um geitinho, estou com tanta saudade!! se  
não tiver em condições de viajar, você me escreva eu  
hirei de qualquér módo, pois para vêr um Pae deve-se  
dar geito...!

'Today [I] wrote to Daddy inviting him to come spend a few months with me, currently, it is entirely impossible for me to get out of the house with so many children, in case he can come, will you find a way, [I] miss him so much!! If [he] is not able to travel, will you write to me, I will go somehow, since to see a father one must find a way...!'

Figures 2 and 3 possibly concern two letters written by the same sender, João Alves de Lima. In one missive, he uses the abbreviated form “V.”, and in the other one, he opts for the whole form “voce”. This sender has used both abbreviated and whole forms in his letters, but when he uses the whole form, he does not include the accent, which is why it is transcribed without it. Figure 4, a letter written by Mario Pereira Lima’s sister, documents the extensive use of the developed form *você* in the first paragraph.

*Tu* is used in around a third of cases (31%) – just over half the occurrences of *você*. The form *o senhor* was found 22 times, representing 9% of the total forms of address in the subject position. *Vossa senhoria* and *vossa excelência*, as expected, appeared only five times, in very particular cases where the relationship between the sender and the recipient was not close.

Compared to the results presented by Lopes & Souza (2012) for letters from Rio de Janeiro, we have a very different scenario for the same period (1870–1949). While in Rio the most frequent form was *tu*, with 62%, followed by *você*, with 38%, our results for letters from São Paulo show the opposite pattern. These two scenarios may indicate that in São Paulo the form *você* had penetrated earlier in the pronominal framework compared to Rio de Janeiro.<sup>10</sup>

When investigating the occurrence of null subject versus non-null subjects, we find a very impressive number of non-null subjects with the form *você*: 82% versus 18% of null subjects,<sup>11</sup> as shown in Table 4.

<sup>10</sup> After 1930, in Rio de Janeiro, the use of the form *você* outstrips the use of the form *tu* (cf. Lopes & Souza 2012; Duarte 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Corresponding to the form *você*, we consider only the letters using exclusively the form *você*.

**Table 4:** Non-null subjects and null subjects.

	Non-null subjects	Null subjects
<i>tu</i>	–	75/75 – 100%
<i>você</i>	117/142 – 82%	25/142 – 18%
<i>o senhor</i>	20/22 – 91%	2/22 – 9%
<i>vossa senhoria</i>	2/3 – 67%	1/3 – 33%
<i>vossa excelência</i>	2/2 – 100%	–

There were no occurrences of the overt form *tu*, that is, the non-null form, in the subject position in the São Paulo letters. This form was identified only by its verbal morpheme (-s). In missives from Rio de Janeiro, in contrast, Lopes & Souza (2012) found 25% of overt subject pronoun *tu* compared with 75% of null subjects corresponding to the form *tu*. The forms *o senhor* and *vossa excelência* tend to appear overtly. There was only one occurrence of non-overt *vossa senhoria* in a letter where the recipient was referred to as *vossa senhoria* during the whole text.

We also compared missives with mixed usage, in which the sender uses a combination of two different forms of address, to letters exclusively using a single form of address. The results are set out in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Mixed usage and single form letters.

	<i>tu</i>	<i>você</i>	<i>o(a)</i> <i>senhor(a)</i>	<i>vossa</i> <i>senhoria</i>	<i>vossa</i> <i>excelência</i>
<i>tu</i> only (18 letters)	32/32 – 100%	–	–	–	–
<i>você</i> only (43 letters)	–	91/91 – 100%	–	–	–
<i>tu/você</i> (6 letters)	42/68 – 62%	26/68 – 38%	–	–	–
<i>o(a)</i> <i>senhor(a)</i> only (3 letters)	–	–	13/13 – 100%	–	–
<i>você/o(a)</i> <i>senhor(a)</i> (4 letters)	–	23/32 – 72%	9/32 – 28%	–	–
<i>vossa</i> <i>senhoria</i> only (1 letter)	–	–	–	2/2 – 100%	–

Table 5 (continued)

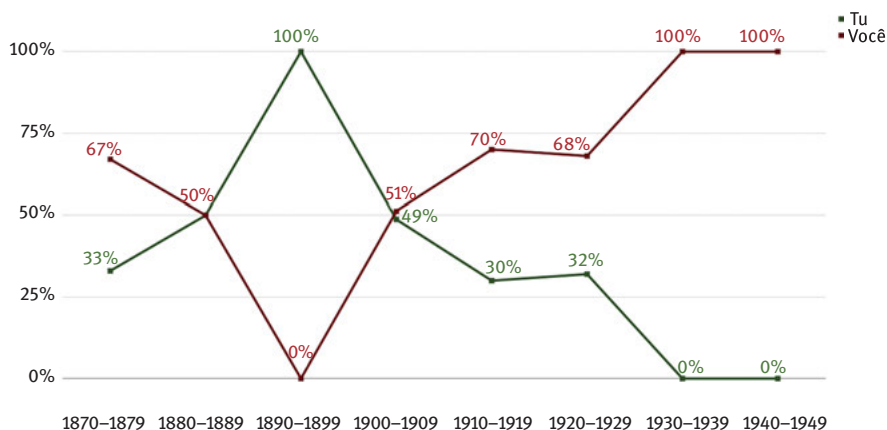
	<i>tu</i>	<i>você</i>	<i>o(a)</i> <i>senhor(a)</i>	<i>vossa</i> <i>senhoria</i>	<i>vossa</i> <i>excelência</i>
<i>vossa</i> <i>excelência</i> only (1 letter)	–	–	–	–	2/2 – 100%
no addressee reference (3 letters)	–	2/3 – 67%	–	1/3 – 33%	–

The most remarkable result is the high number of letters exclusively using the form *você*: 43 of a total of 104 letters (41%). There are 18 missives where the form *tu* was used exclusively. Only six letters use both *tu* and *você*, with *tu* the most frequent – 42 out of a total of 68 occurrences. Consequently, it appears that the most frequent pattern is the combination of instances of null subjects with the verb inflected for the second person singular (i.e. with the verbal morpheme *-s*, corresponding to the second person singular pronoun, *tu*), and instances of overt subjects with the form *você* (accompanied by the verb with the zero morpheme). This mixed usage also includes letters that combine the more honorific form *o(a) senhor(a)* with *você*. The forms *vossa senhoria* and *vossa excelência* are never mixed with other forms.

Graph 1 shows the use of the forms *você* and *tu* in the letters from São Paulo by decade during the period 1870 to 1949. The consistent rise of *você* over *tu* begins in the second decade of the 20th century (1910–1919). Before this, the forms are either equally distributed (1880–1889 and 1900–1909) or one form is predominant: *você* in 1870–1879 and *tu* in 1890–1899.

It is significant that we have only two letters from 1890–1899, which may explain the unexpected absence of the form *você* in this decade. The exclusive use of the form *tu* in these letters is associated with socio-geographical factors. According to the literature (cf. Lopes et al. 2018), Rio de Janeiro is a state where we identify significant use of *tu* during the 19th century and similar frequencies of *você* and *tu* from 1900 to 1939. One of these missives was written by Homem de Mello, who, despite being born in São Paulo, lived for a long time in Rio de Janeiro, where he wrote the letter. The other letter was written by a brother-in-law of Washington Luís, João de Oliveira Barros, who was from São Paulo. It is essential to locate more letters representative of this decade to ensure a more robust result.

Whereas in the missives from São Paulo, the predominance of *você* over *tu* starts in the years 1910–1919, in Rio de Janeiro, this change is observed 20 years later, during the decade 1930–1939 (Lopes & Souza 2012).



**Graph 1:** *Tu* and *você* in subject position from 1870 to 1949, by decade.

## 4.2 Gender

There are nine letters written by women. As expected (cf. Lopes & Souza 2012 and Labov 1994, among others), the use of innovative forms correlates with female speakers. An analysis of the senders' gender shows that women use the form *você* almost exclusively (89%). The recipients of these letters were other women and Washington Luís, who received many letters from his mother-in-law. There is only one case of the form *tu*, in a mixed usage letter. The other form found in missives written by women is the more courteous form *o senhor*, used twice. The results are set out in Table 6.

**Table 6:** Forms of address in letters written by women.

Forms of address	Number and %
<i>tu</i>	1/27 – 4%
<i>você</i>	24/27 – 89%
<i>o senhor</i>	2/27 – 7%

## 4.3 Social relations

The last element of analysis concerns the social relations between sender and recipient, to investigate the distribution of address forms according to symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships (see Table 7). The results show that the form *você*

is productive in all three types of relations examined: symmetrical (between friends: 69%), asymmetrical inferior-superior (son > mother: 72%) and asymmetrical superior-inferior (mother-in-law > son-in-law: 76% / uncle > nephew: 100%). The only type of relationship in which the frequency of the form *tu* appears to be close to that of the form *você* is the solidary relation between cousins: the forms *tu* and *você* are equally distributed.

**Table 7:** Symmetrical/asymmetrical social relations and use of address forms.

Social relations		<i>tu</i>	<i>você</i>	<i>o senhor/ a senhora</i>	<i>vossa senhoria</i>	<i>vossa excelência</i>					
Symmetrical relations	between cousins	18/36	50%	18/36	50%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	between brothers-in-law	45/99	45%	54/99	55%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	between friends	7/35	20%	24/35	69%	1/35	3%	3/35	9%	-	-
Asymmetrical relations	between sisters	-	-	6/6	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	son > mother	-	-	23/32	72%	9/32	28%	-	-	-	-
	mother/father-in-law > son-in-law	5/21	24%	16/21	76%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	uncle > nephew	-	-	1/1	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	nephew/niece > uncle	-	-	-	-	12/14	86%	-	-	2/14	14%

The forms *o senhor* and *vossa senhoria* are used between friends, while the more honorific *vossa excelência* is documented only between nephew and uncle. The feminine form *a senhora* is used by a son writing to his mother.

Examples (1) to (5) are extracts from the corpus letters and they show that, in these letters from São Paulo, the form *você* was so well-established that it had already spread into accusative positions as well. Example (1) documents this use of *você* as an accusative.

- (1) Eis o que agora penso, submetto a seu criterio, e julgado util por todos os interessados, que no caso sao os meus filhos, autorizo *você* a agir por minha parte.

‘This is what [I] think now, [I] submit it to your appreciation, and if all interested parts deem it useful, in this case my children, I allow you to act on my behalf’  
(Letter n. 177, 1 August 1937, Washington Luís)

In the letters written by Mariquinha, 2nd Baroness of Piracicaba, who exclusively uses the form *você* in subject position, the clitics *o/a* (related to *você*)<sup>12</sup> are very productive, as seen in examples (2) and (3). Example (2) is from a letter written by Mariquinha in 1912, where she uses the possessive *tua*, related to the form *tu*.

- (2) Queira aceitar muitas saudades de *tua* mãe que muito *o* estima e considera.  
‘lit. Please accept many vows of missing you from your mother who very much esteems and values you’

(Letter n. 08, 3 December 1912, 2.<sup>a</sup> Baronesa de Piracicaba – Mariquinha)

- (3) Desculpe *encomodal\_o*, junto remeto essa carta, de minha Sobrinha fazendo esse pedido [...]

‘[I] am sorry to bother you, enclosed [I] send this letter, from my niece making that request’

(Letter n. 55, 27 August 1921, 2.<sup>a</sup> Baronesa de Piracicaba – Mariquinha)

Example (4) is from a letter in which the sender, João Oliveira de Barros, is addressing the recipient with the form *você* throughout the entire missive, but at the very end, uses the form *tu*, identified by the ending of the verb *poder* (*podes*). The expression *podes crêr* (lit. ‘(you) can believe’, or more idiomatically, ‘believe you me’) is an idiomatic phrase, still very much used nowadays in more informal situations. The use of *tu* here could be understood as part of this fixed expression and not a conscious choice on the part of the writer. The same letter contains both *você* in the accusative (“que pode esclarecer voce” ‘that may enlighten you’) and *você* with a preposition (dative case) (“que <p>uder ser útil a você” ‘that may be useful to you’).<sup>13</sup>

**12** In Portuguese, accusative (i.e. object) pronouns appear in the form of clitics (i.e. weak forms), with the following paradigm:

1SG, subject pronoun: *Eu* – object clitic: *me*;

2SG, subject pronoun: *Tu* – object clitic: *te*;

3SG, subject pronoun: *Ele/Ela* – object clitic *a/o*;

1PL, subject pronoun: *Nós* – object clitic: *nos*;

2PL, subject pronoun: *Vós* – object clitic: *vos*;

3PL, subject pronoun: *Eles/Elas* – object clitic *os/as*.

**13** The symbol <..> in the transcription indicates the editor’s emendations – so, in <p>uder, the “p” was inserted by the manuscript’s editor, and was either absent or barely legible in the original.



(4) no tempo que elle foi inspector ou antes fiscal do governo junto a Ingleza, elle collecionou muita cousa que pode esclarecer *voce* sobre a situação da Ingleza Em tudo que <p>uder ser util *a voce*, *podes crêr* que terei muito prazer.

‘at the time when he was the inspector or rather government auditor at the Ingleza, he collected many things that may enlighten you about the situation at the Ingleza [...] In all that may be useful to you, [you] can believe [I] will be much obliged’  
(Letter n. 138, 4 July 1927, João Oliveira de Barros)

Example (5) shows an exclusive *você* letter with the use of the clitic *o*. Unlike examples (2) and (3), where the use of the clitic appears to be conditioned by fixed expressions, in this case the clitic appears in a random sentence (“pois nada resolveremos sem ouvi-lo”), In fact, standard grammar recommends that the clitic is placed just after *sem* ‘without’.

(5) Qualquer proposta viavel mandaremos telegramma, pois nada resolveremos sem ouvir-o.

‘Any viable proposal [we] will send a telegram, as [we] shall decide nothing without hearing from you’.

(Letter n. 180, 7 August 1946, Álvaro de Souza Queirós)

## 5 Conclusion

The analysis of letters written in São Paulo from the period 1870 to 1949 shows that the form *tu* is used exclusively as a null subject. It is therefore only possible to identify its use by verb endings. This finding differs from that for letters written in Rio de Janeiro, in which the form *tu* explicitly appears in 25% of cases (Lopes & Souza 2012). Another difference between letters from São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro is the higher frequency of the form *você* in São Paulo (58%), compared with the more frequent use of *tu* in Rio de Janeiro (62%).

In São Paulo, *você* is used more frequently than *tu* in the 1910s, whereas in Rio de Janeiro this occurs only in the 1930s. Lopes & Souza (2012) found *você* as an accusative only in letters from Rio de Janeiro which presented innovative structures, with mixed forms of address, whereas in missives from São Paulo, the accusative positions with clitics *o/a* related to the form *você* appear in letters in which *você* is used exclusively. The fact that the form *você* is very productive in all types of social relations, both symmetrical and asymmetrical, associated with the fact that the form appears frequently in accusative positions, probably shows

that *você* had become part of the pronominal framework of São Paulo before this occurred in Rio de Janeiro.

Bearing in mind that the corpora only shed a selective light on the diachrony under scrutiny, the results show that the spread of *você* in the Capitancy of São Paulo happened before the spread of *você* in Rio de Janeiro. As we suggested, a higher frequency of *você* would represent the foreshadowing of the current sub-system of address forms used in the state of São Paulo. More specifically, because the rate of overt usage in the subject position is higher with *você*, and actually zero with *tu*, this supports the hypothesis of *você* leading the present-day tendency of high use of overt pronominal subjects in Brazilian Portuguese as compared with European Portuguese. In this regard, our results may be revealing for the history of *você*, although the domain of intimacy, privacy and orality (where *tu* might have been more frequent) is underrepresented in the corpus.

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