

## Semantic change and cyclicity in the evolution of contrast markers in Brazilian Portuguese

Luísa Ferrari

Postgraduate Visiting Research Student – The University of Manchester

PhD Candidate in Linguistics – São Paulo State University

São Paulo Research Foundation / FAPESP

In this paper, I analyze the evolution of two new contrast markers in Brazilian Portuguese (BP), *enquanto (que)* and *ao passo que*, which are both close in meaning to English *while*. Both markers are originally temporal connectives that express simultaneity relations, being now used in contrastive contexts in contemporary BP. For instance, (1) and (2) show the temporal and the contrastive uses of *ao passo que*, respectively.

(1) Lança se o succo esprimido em grandes caldeiras, nas quaes se lhe faz hum fogo vivo e **ao passo que** este Assucar se evapora, se lhe ajunta novo, até que se faça vermelho, e espesso. (18<sup>th</sup> century)

[*You throw the squeezed juice in large boilers, in which you ignite an open fire and **while** this sugar evaporates, new sugar comes up, until it is red and thick.*]

(2) É em suma a teoria que Landulfo expusera seis anos antes, mas para condená-la, **ao passo que** o novo libelista trata de coonestá-la por julgar D. Pedro o “mais brasileiro dos brasileiros, o mais liberal dos liberais”. (20<sup>th</sup> century)

[*It's basically the theory that Landulfo exposed six years earlier, but he did it to condemn it, **whereas** the new “libelista” wants to prove it right because he considers D. Pedro to be the most Brazilian of all Brazilians, the most liberal one.*]

The diachronic changes undergone by *enquanto (que)* and *ao passo que* show evidence of a cyclical evolution, which I investigate in this paper. My main goals are to analyze (i) the nature of their cyclic development, if it is confirmed, and (ii) the semantic-pragmatic factors that played a part for them to undergo similar diachronic trajectories.

I argue that *enquanto (que)* and *ao passo que* form a cycle-like evolution of the type described by Pons Bordería and Cardona (2020) as concomitance. Based on data from written and spoken Brazilian Portuguese, produced between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and stemming from argumentative and spontaneous texts, I claim that the changes these two markers go through exhibit nearly all the traits of pragmatic cycles, but differ from them primarily in not being developed in the same diaphasic varieties. Both temporal and contrastive uses of *enquanto (que)* are considerably more frequent in discourse traditions that are typical of more spontaneous communicative settings, whereas both temporal and contrastive *ao passo que* constructions appear almost exclusively in more argumentative discourse traditions. I will thus follow Pons Bordería and

Cardona (2020) in assuming that the explanation of semantic-pragmatic cycles and other cycle-like evolutions benefits from integrating the notion of discourse traditions and considering the role of cultural practices.

I will show, moreover, that the rise of the contrastive meaning in both trajectories is closely related to a reconfiguration in the types of processes linked by the markers, with a consequent change in the way the events relate in space and time. In the original temporal uses, *enquanto (que)* and *ao passo que* tend to refer to more material processes – in the sense proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) – that typically occur in the same space and at the same time. As the contrastive meaning moves into the foreground, the markers come to describe more mental processes, with either a spatial and temporal dissociation between the events or the absence of an overt mention of the spatial and temporal locations of the events, which results from the irrelevance of the sociophysical dimension to the interpretation, as more abstract mental processes are at issue.

## References

Halliday, M. A. K. & C. Matthiessen. 2004. *An introduction to functional grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.

Pons Bordería, S. & A. B. Llopis Cardona. 2020. Some reflections on semantic-pragmatic cycles. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 21: 315-346.