Ditransitive constructions: what sets Brazilian Portuguese apart from other Romance languages?

The aim of this paper is to show that a diachronic change in the expression of indirect objects (IOs) in Brazilian Portuguese (BP) has set this language apart from other Romance languages, in terms of the possible strategies to head IOs of ditransitive constructions. Since the 19th century, BP is generalizing the use of the full prepositions *para* 'to' and *de* 'of' in ditransitive sentences with verbs of movement, transfer and creation – as *dar* 'give', *enviar* 'send' (*cf.* 1) and *preparar* 'prepare' (*cf.*2), respectively.

Alongside with the substitution of the prepositions stated above, the morphological notation of the dative argument in the third person - represented by the clitic *lhe* – has also been replaced in BP by other strategies, such as 3rd person pronouns preceded by *para* or *de* - *para ele(s)/ ela(s)* 'to him/ her/ them' (*cf.* 1); *dele (a)(s)* 'his/her/hers/their(s) (*cf.* 2) (*cf.* Gomes, 2003; Freire, 2005; Torres Morais & Berlinck, 2006, 2007; Torres Morais & Salles 2010).

(1) Maria enviou uma carta <u>para</u> o João   / <u>para</u> ele.
     Maria sent   a letter   P *para (to)* the João. OBL / to him.3SG

(2) A Maria   preparou o jantar   <u>para</u> o João   / <u>do</u> João   / <u>para</u> ele   / <u>dele.</u>
     The Maria prepared the dinner P para(to) the João.OBL / P de (of) the João.GEN / to him. 3SG / of.3SG.GEN

In European Portuguese (EP), on the other hand, the IOs that accompany these verbs are introduced by the preposition *a* and can always alternate with the dative clitic *lhe* (cf. 3).

(3) A   Maria enviou uma carta <u>ao</u> João   /enviou-<u>lhe</u>   uma carta.
     The Maria sent   a letter   P *a (to)* the João. DAT / sent -3SG.DAT a letter

There is also a remarkable fact about creation verbs, because these constructions in BP are not only different from the ones in EP, but when the preposition *a* introduces the IOs, these sentences become ungrammatical for Brazilian speakers (*cf.* 4).

(4) A   Maria preparou o jantar   <u>ao</u> João   (EP/ *BP)
     The Maria prepared the dinner P a (to) the João. DAT

Hence, taking these empirical facts, I assume that BP cannot express the dative case anymore, nor via a functional preposition (the preposition *a*), nor by its morphologic counterpart (the dative clitic *lhe*). Consequently, BP has shifted from a type of language which has evidence for Case, as EP does, to one where Case is being assigned via lexical prepositions.

According to Torres Morais (2007), the IOs of ditransitive sentences in EP are dative arguments introduced by an applicative head, as illustrated in (5):

(5) [$_{vP}$ O João [$_{v'}$ v [$_{VP}$ enviou [$_{ApplP}$ à Maria/lhe [$_{APPL'}$ Ø [$_{DP}$ uma carta]]]]]]]   (EP)

Torres Morais (2007) assumes that EP is part of the group of languages with *dative alternation*, because the preposition *a,* which introduces IOs in sentences as (3), is a functional element responsible for assigning dative Case to the DP. Also, this dative marker always alternates with the third person clitic *lhe*, which would be another evidence of its dative status, once the clitic is the morphologic expression of the dative case and it is introduced in SpecApplP as a proper argument (*cf.* 5). The author's analysis for EP is in accordance with Cuervo's (2003) proposal for ditransitive sentences in Spanish, and Diaconescu & Rivero (2007) for Romanian. For the authors, these two Romance languages also present *dative alternation* in the context of ditransitive constructions (*cf.* Marantz 1993; Pylkkänen 2002), once this alternation can be mainly based on the obligatory clitic doubling, as also discussed by Anagnostopoulou (2003) for Greek.

BP, on the contrary, has lost the possibility of introducing dative elements in its argument structure by an applicative head, as its IOs are always headed by lexical prepositions which do not alternate with dative clitics. Consequently, I propose that IOs in BP should be introduced in the argument structure via a p head, as in (6), not by an ApplP, as in (5) for EP.

(6) [$_{vP}$ João [$_{v'}$ v [$_{VP}$ enviou [$_{pP}$ uma carta [$_{p'}$ Ø [$_{PP}$ para Maria/ ela]]]]]]]   (BP)

According to Svenonius (2003, 2004, 2007) and Wood (2012), the hypothesis of a pP head comes from the possibility of drawing a parallel between the pP domain and the vP domain, in the sense that the prepositional structure involves a 'light preposition' p and a P in the same way as categories v and V in the verbal domain. Following the concepts of Figure and Ground, first proposed by Talmy (1978), the DO would be the Figure in a ditransitive construction and should be introduced in the Spec position of pP. The complement of the p head is a Ground argument (the IO) accompanied by a full preposition and introduced in the argument structure by the PP head, as represented in (6). Therefore, the full preposition is placed under the PP head because, according to Svenonius (2003), the preposition establishes a close relation with the Ground rather than the Figure since it applies c-selection restrictions in relation to the IO, not the DO. For instance, the preposition *para,* with verbs of transfer and movement can only select complements that have a Goal or a Beneficiary as a theta-role.

Moreover, once the head p is not the higher head capable of introducing arguments in the relevant local domain, as vP legitimates an agentive relation above pP, this means that p can be responsible for holding a thematic relation. Therefore, this crucially confirms Cuervo's (2010) proposal that ditransitive verbs do not require two separate arguments, but, in fact, select a *relation* between the DO and the IO. Hence, according to the author, this relation established between the two internal arguments can be introduced in the argument structure by an applicative head, a small clause or a prepositional phrase, as in (6) for BP.

Hence, these diachronic change in the expression of IOs in BP have a relevant unfolding, because, as shown in (7), EP also presents a prepositional ditransitive construction in which the IO is introduced by a full lexical preposition (in this case *para*) and cannot be substituted by the clitic:

(7) a. O José   enviou uma carta <u>para</u>   Lisboa   / *enviou-<u>lhe</u>   uma carta
        The José sent   a   letter P $_{para\ (to)}$ Lisbon.OBL /   sent -3SG.DAT a letter
    a' [$_{vP}$ O José [$_{v'}$ v [$_{VP}$ enviou [$_{PP}$ uma carta [$_{P'}$ para [$_{DP}$ Lisboa]]]]]]]

Therefore, I assume that the existence of the lexical preposition *para* in EP (also in historical BP) enabled the reanalysis discussed above for BP. Following on from Chomsky (2005), parametric variation emerges from the interaction of an underspecified UG, PLD (primary linguistic data) and Factor 3. According Biberauer & Roberts (2015), Factor 3 main manifestations are *Feature Economy* and *Input Generalization.* Thus, I argue that the presence of the preposition *para* as well as *de* in the inventory of possibilities to introduce IOs in EP and historical BP, coupled with the loss of the dative *lhe*, were the trigger for Brazilian children to generalize the use of these full prepositions to introduce IOs, examples (1) and (2), instead of the functional preposition *a*, as (3) and (4) for EP.

In sum, given the above, I assume that the diachronic change in the choice of prepositions in BP, as well as the decline of the third person dative clitic *lhe,* set Brazilian Portuguese apart from other Romance languages regarding the introduction of IOs in their argument structure.

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