

## **The Acceptability of Clitic and Tonic Accusative 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Pronouns in Written Brazilian Portuguese**

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### ABSTRACT

In the present study, we analyze the acceptability of 3<sup>rd</sup> person accusative clitic pronouns (3P-ACC) in written modality as compared to 3P tonic pronouns in the same context. Contemporary Brazilian Portuguese has lost 3P-ACC clitics in oral modality. For this reason, some linguists have preferred not to use 3P-ACC clitics in experimental items, even in reading experiments. Against this trend, we conducted an acceptability judgment task to investigate whether the low frequency of 3P-ACC clitics and the high frequency of 3P tonic pronouns in oral modality drive the evaluation of these pronouns in written modality. Our results suggest that, for students ranging from technical high-school to post graduation, both pronouns are highly accepted. Thus this leads us to maintain that both 3P-ACC clitics and 3P tonic pronouns are adequate for experimental items of reading tasks.

**KEYWORDS:** Brazilian Portuguese; clitic pronouns; tonic pronouns; acceptability judgment

### RESUMO

No presente estudo, analisamos a aceitabilidade de pronomes clíticos acusativos de terceira pessoa (3P-ACC) na modalidade escrita em comparação com pronomes tônicos de 3P no mesmo contexto. O Português Brasileiro (PB) contemporâneo perdeu os clíticos de 3P na modalidade oral. Por essa razão, alguns linguistas têm preferido não usar os clíticos de 3P em itens experimentais, mesmo em tarefas de leitura. Na contramão dessa tendência, conduzimos uma tarefa de julgamento de aceitabilidade, com o objetivo de investigar se a baixa frequência dos clíticos de 3P e a alta frequência dos pronomes tônicos na modalidade oral influenciam a avaliação dos mesmos na modalidade escrita. Nossos resultados sugerem que, para alunos com nível escolar variando do ensino médio técnico até a pós-graduação, ambos os pronomes são altamente aceitos. Isso nos leva a sustentar que tanto os clíticos quanto os pronomes tônicos de 3P são adequados para itens experimentais de tarefas de leitura.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Português Brasileiro; pronomes clíticos; pronomes tônicos; julgamento de aceitabilidade

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## Introduction

Brazilian Portuguese (BP) and European Portuguese (EP) have evolved differently throughout the years with respect to many aspects. One of the main differences can be noticed in the usage of 3<sup>rd</sup> person accusative pronouns. Whereas EP has preserved the clitic system, BP has almost lost it and has applied different strategies to replace it. This new system includes the use of both null and 3P tonic pronouns in direct object function position. It is the contention of Oliveira (2007) that for question (1), for instance, EP would only license the answers in (2) and BP would license both (2) and (3). In other words, EP and BP allow the use of 3P clitic pronouns (2b) and repeated NPs (2c) (in BP (2b) is likely to be the least preferred option at least for oral genres), but only BP allows the use of null pronouns (3a) and 3P tonic pronouns (3b).

- (1) Você conhece o João?  
 You know the João  
 “Do you know João?”
- (2) a. Sim  
 Yes  
 “Yes”
- b. (Sim), conheço-o.  
 Yes know him  
 “(Yes), I know him”
- c. Sim, conheço o João  
 Yes know the João  
 “Yes, I know João”
- (3) a. Conheço [Ø]  
 Know  
 “I know him”
- b. Sim, (eu) conheço ele  
 Yes I know he  
 “Yes, I know him”
- (OLIVEIRA, 2007, p. 2)

The main analyses for this diachronic change relate the loss of 3<sup>rd</sup> person clitics to a modification in the directionality of phonological cliticization (NUNES, 1993, 2011) and to rearrangements in BP agreement system (GALVES, 1989; CYRINO, 1993, 1997; KATO, 1993). The presence of 3P-ACC clitics in current standard written and oral BP would be due to sociolinguistic factors, mainly associated with education (CORRÊA, 1991).

Due to these theoretical findings, it has been a common practice, as maintained by Maia and Lima (2014), not to use 3P clitic pronouns in linguistic and psycholinguistic experimental items. At first glance, this option seems natural since most experiments focus on speaker's natural behavior and, hence, the most natural pronouns should be preferred. However, these changes in BP pronominal system seem to have played a major role in the oral modality (CORRÊA, 1991; MAIA; LIMA, 2014) and, therefore, the exclusion of 3P clitic pronouns in reading experiments linguistics is still open to debate. The aim of this study is to shed some light on this topic.

Throughout this text we will refer to written and oral modalities in a more general manner, without references to specific genres. Thus in our experiment we used sentences out of context in order not to evoke rules related to specific genres. We conducted an acceptability judgment task with Brazilian students (ranging from technical high school to post graduation) in order to compare the preference for these pronouns. In the next section (section 1) we discuss BP pronominal system. We then describe the experiment we conducted to explore whether the changes occurred in the core grammar also influence the written modality (section 2). We conclude (section 3) with considerations about the implications of our findings.

### **1. 3P-ACC objects in contemporary BP registers**

It is a consensus that the 3P accusative clitics *o*, *a* and their allomorphs are not part of contemporary vernacular BP (TARALLO, 1983; DUARTE, 1989; GALVES, 1989; CORRÊA, 1991; PAGOTTO, 1993; CYRINO 1993; NUNES, 1993, 2011; KATO 1993). As most of these studies claim, the usage of these forms is a result of schooling and limited to formal styles and written language (NUNES, 2011, p. 14).

Corrêa (1991) demonstrates that 3P-ACC clitics have a very low frequency in the speech of college students (11.2%) and do not appear at all in the speech of illiterate speakers. Machado-Rocha (2013) shows that they are completely absent in spontaneous speech of high-school students. As for written language, Nunes (2011), based on Corrêa

(1991), highlights that the frequency of clitics reaches a peak of 85.7% in the writings of college students, but these elements start to appear only in the writings of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students and, by this time, children are already 9-10 years old. Based on these facts, Nunes assumes that these clitics are not part of the core grammar of BP. Instead, they are acquired like a second language structure attained through schooling, as opposed to the other clitics, which are products of a regular process of language acquisition.

Nunes (1993, 2011) proposes that the loss of 3P-ACC clitics in BP was the result of the change in the directionality of phonological cliticization in the language. As a consequence of this change, BP now allows the weak pronoun *ele* in object position and a greater range of null objects, (i.e. null pronouns, *pro*) (see for instance Galves (1989), Kato (1993) and Cyrino (1993, 1997)).

- (4) a. Eu entreguei **ele** pra Maria  
 I delivered it to.the Maria  
 “I delivered it to Maria”
- b. Eu entreguei (pro) pra Maria  
 I delivered to.the Maria  
 “I delivered it to Maria”
- (NUNES 2011, p. 14)

The core idea of Nunes (1993) is that the onset of the syllable of 3P-ACC clitics must be licensed, which in turn is achieved via phonological cliticization to the preceding word. In EP, it is a regular process, since this language has an enclitic pattern. This is to say that cliticization in EP is a process of leftward phonological affixation. BP, on the other hand, exhibits a rightwards phonological cliticization pattern (see e.g. Pagotto (1993)). Within this new system with rightward phonological cliticization, the question arises as to how the onset of the syllable of 3P-ACC clitics could be licensed. Nunes (1993) proposes that once a generation of children acquired rightward phonological cliticization, there could be no way for the onset of the syllable of 3P-ACC clitics to be licensed, and children then simply failed to acquire these forms.

More recently, Machado-Rocha (2016) and Machado-Rocha and Ramos (2016) correlate the absence of 3P-ACC clitics to the synchronic status of the object clitic

projection in BP, in accounting for the phenomenon of clitic doubling, as illustrated in (5):

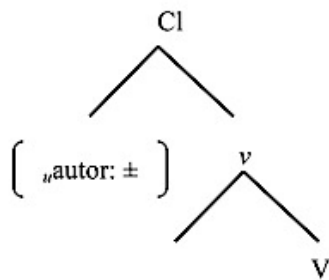
- (5) a. Ele me ajuda eu  
 He 1PCL helps I  
 “He helps me”
- b. Eu te ajudo você  
 I 2PCL help you  
 “I help you”
- c. \*Eu o ajudo ele  
 I 3PCL help he  
 “I help him”

(MACHADO-ROCHA, 2016, p.13, 19.)

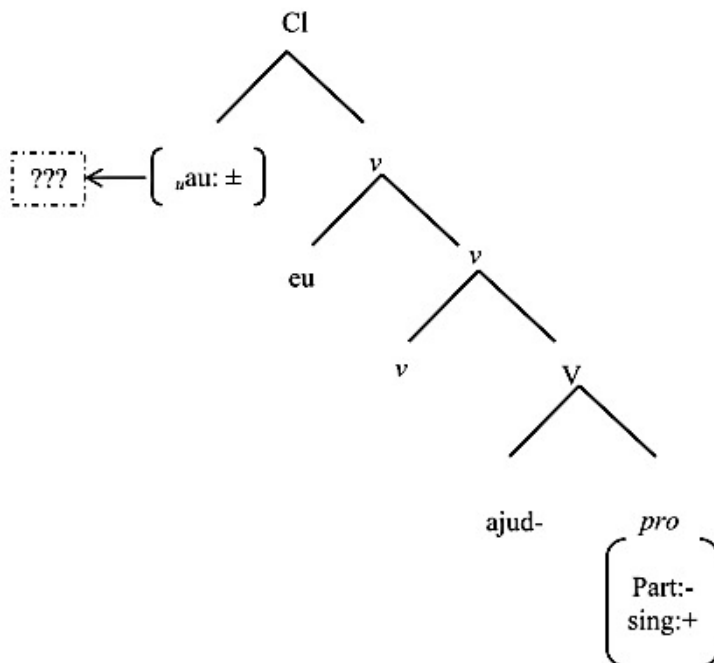
As (5) shows, BP clitic doubling occurs only for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns, but not for 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronouns. The same is valid for single cliticization structures, when only oral registers are being considered, as we have discussed. Instead of assuming the obvious answer that (5-c) would be ungrammatical due to the absence of 3P-ACC clitic pronouns in BP lexicon, Machado-Rocha (2016) takes the opposite direction and argues that 3P-ACC clitics fail to obtain because the featural configuration of the syntactic projection of clitics in BP is incompatible with those items.

Following Sportiche (1996), we consider clitics to have their own functional projection and that all clitic structures are doubled constructions, either with an overt argument DP/pronoun or with a null element. Since clitic doubling in BP is optional, the clitic head is taken to be an optional agreement projection (according to McCloskey (1996)) in the domain of *v*. And because it generates only the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person marks *me* and *te*, it is assumed that this projection hosts only one uninterpretable, unvalued person features, namely [<sub>i</sub>autor:±], based on the ideas of Adger (2006).

(6)



Since 1P and 2P objects have a valued counterpart for the unvalued feature of CIP ( $[u\text{autor:}+]$  and  $[u\text{autor:}-]$ , respectively), these elements can license a clitic (when the object is 1P or 2P *pro*) and can appear in clitic doubling constructions (when the object is 1P or 2P overt pronoun or a DP with 1P or 2P possessive determiner). However, when the object is a 3P overt element or *pro*, there will be no potential goal for the valuation of CIP's unvalued formal features, and the derivation crashes at this point:

(7) <sup>\*/?</sup>Eu o ajudo (*pro*)

Because of this, when we leave aside the 3P null object, the only possible construction for 3P-ACC arguments is with the full pronoun (see Machado-Rocha

(2016) for details on how CIP can be present or absent in the derivation, depending on the presence of a valued counterpart of the feature [<sub>u</sub>autor:±]).

When we consider the data that will be discussed in this paper, this analysis predicts that the featural configurations of the clitic projection in BP oral registers and in BP standard writing are not the same. As we have seen, Nunes (1993, 2011) assumes that the acquisition of 3P-ACC clitic forms in BP standard writing is the result of a process similar to second language acquisition. In these terms, we have to consider that in the grammar of standard BP writing, a different set of features is present in CIP, so that 3P-ACC clitics are possible.

This line of reasoning is coherent with Kato (2005)<sup>1</sup>, which proposes that I-language is composed of a core grammar and a “marked periphery”, as assumed by Chomsky (1981). This core-periphery structure would account for a kind of “bilingualism” in what regards L1 vs. literate knowledge. For Kato, L1’s marked periphery is where parametric values may be present in a different fashion when compared to core grammar: these values would be marked, they would have a recessive character, and they might assume a competitive behavior during schooling in relation to those values defined in core grammar. The marked periphery would then account for phenomena of linguistic borrowing, change residues, creations, such that individuals of the same community may or may not present these phenomena marginally. The marked periphery is also responsible for different levels of literacy, and account, for instance, for the presence of structures that cannot be attributed to the core grammatical knowledge. (KATO, 2005, p. 132-134).

Due to the great range of differences between spoken and written Brazilian Portuguese, Kato argues that, for a Brazilian child, learning how to write is like learning a second language (KATO, 2015, p. 139). The marked periphery would be responsible for the creation of individual “variation islands”, providing the speaker with expressive nuances. Thereby, a literate adult would be a code-switching bilingual that alternates between the core grammar G1 and the marked periphery G2. Kato highlights that G2 does not have the same nature of G1, the former being comprised of superficial fragments of the initial parametric fixation. According to her, G2 is not actually the result of parametric selection, but represents “stylistic rules”, arbitrarily selected from

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<sup>1</sup> We thank an anonymous referee for pointing out this correlation to us.

past grammars or borrowed from European Portuguese grammar. (KATO, 2005, p. 142).

In what follows we will show that the acceptability of 3P-ACC clitics and 3P tonic pronouns in written modality seems to indicate that both G1 and G2 are being considered by the subjects in their evaluations.

## 2. Investigating Clitic and Tonic Pronouns in Written Modality

### Materials and Methods

#### *Apparatus*

We conducted an online Acceptability Judgment Task built at the website Easy Test Maker and conducted through Sona Systems. The independent variable was the direct object pronoun in the target sentences (3P-ACC clitics or 3P tonic pronoun). The dependent variable was the acceptability ratings provided by the participants.

The manner a sentence, a construction or any other linguistic unit sound to a speaker can offer important clues about his/her linguistic knowledge (SOUZA; OLIVEIRA, 2014; SOUZA et al., 2015). Consequently, the acceptability judgment task has been used by linguists who seek to investigate the grammar of different classes of speakers. This experimental paradigm consists in observing how speakers evaluate sentences in relation to their well-formedness (KELLER, 1998). The task is relatively simple: a representative sample of a speaking community is presented to a group of sentences (target sentences, control sentences and distractor sentences) and evaluate, usually with numbers, how acceptable each sentence sounds. After that, the obtained data is statistically analyzed, allowing us to observe potentially significant contrasts among the independent/manipulated variables.

It is important to notice that what is evaluated is the acceptability of the sentences and, not necessarily, their grammaticality. Sometimes these terms are used interchangeably, but they refer to different things in fact. Whereas grammaticality is a theoretical construct based on linguistic theories rules, acceptability is a perceptual construct. Thus, the grammaticality of a sentence is a logical consequence of linguistic theory assumptions and its acceptability is the conscious sensation speakers have when reading/listening to it (MYERS, 2009).



### *Participants*

In this study, we carried out an acceptability judgment task with a between subject design. This strategy of not exposing participants to both pronouns aimed at reducing the possibility that they identified the target structure of the study. We understand that participants would behave more naturally if they processed and analyzed only one type of pronoun during the task. The activation of two types of pronouns during the task might encourage them to make explicit comparisons that do not reflect their natural behavior. 82 participants responded to List A, in which the target sentences had a 3P tonic pronoun in direct object position, and 81 participants responded to List B, in which the target sentences had a 3P-ACC clitic also in direct object position. Thus, in total, 163 participants took part in this study voluntarily.

The participants were all residents of the Belo Horizonte metropolitan area, a region in which Brazilian Portuguese is the prevalent language. They were 24 years old in average (SD=6 years). 109 were women (66,9%) and 54 were men (33,1%).

The participants had different levels of education. 33 (20,7%) people were technical high school students, 80 (50,3%) were undergraduates, 23 (14,5%) had a college degree and 23 (14,5%) had both a college degree and a complete or incomplete post graduation attendance. It is important to highlight that there are studies suggesting that the use of this kind of convenience sample does not interfere with the results. Souza et al. (2015), for example, demonstrated that students of linguistics did not behave differently from students of other areas in an acceptability judgment task.

Besides analyzing the general behavior of these participants, it was also possible to consider the impact of formal education in the acceptability judgment of the 3P-ACC clitic and 3P tonic pronouns as direct objects. Such analysis is non-trivial to the understanding of the focused pronouns in BP since there are studies indicating that the speakers' preferences concerning these two pronouns vary, in both oral and written modality, according to their level of education (CORRÊA, 1991).

### *Stimuli*

In total, 64 sentences composed the experimental corpus of the acceptability judgment task. There were 8 target items, 56 distractors (Appendix 1). The target sentences were 8 instances of the depictive construction, as illustrated in (8). All the target sentences were formed by two clauses: the first one had an NP subject, a VP with a transitive verb in the past and an NP direct object; and the second one started with the conjunction

“e/and” followed by a VP formed by another transitive verb in the past with a pronoun as direct object – 3P tonic pronoun in List A and 3P-ACC clitic in List B – that referred to the direct object of the previous clause, and an AP that described the direct object. To avoid ambiguity, the two NPs in the first clause differed from each other in terms of gender and the pronoun in the second clause agreed only with the direct object. As described, these sentences were built based on the needs of the experiment and as such they are introspective data. Because of this, we will not distinguish among the various written genres in what regards to their relation to orality and literacy.<sup>2</sup>

- (8) Linda fatiou o salmão e comeu **ele** cru  
 Linda sliced the salmon and ate **he/it** raw  
 “Linda sliced the salmon and ate it raw”

- (9) Linda fatiou o salmão e **o** comeu cru  
 Linda sliced the salmon and **him/it** ate raw  
 “Linda sliced the salmon and ate it raw”

The distractor items included grammatical<sup>3</sup> (24), ungrammatical<sup>4</sup> (8) and non-standard sentences<sup>5</sup> (24). We chose these sentences because they can all be easily interpreted regardless of their grammatical or standard status. All the items were pseudo-randomized in a manner that the target sentences would not be likely to be presented in sequence. Therefore, we also diminished possible biases related to the order of exposition and the repetition in sequence of the target structure.

Before starting the task, the participants were also presented to 4 sentences with comments about how the experimenter would judge their acceptability. The aim of these examples was to illustrate that the acceptability judgment should be more focused on

<sup>2</sup> A referee rightly drew our attention to a very important point about written genres and their relation to orality and literacy. Written genres could be characterized along a continuum orality-literacy, depending on how they approach or depart from spoken language (BORTONI-RICARDO, 2004). Based on this, Freire (2011) demonstrated that the presence of 3P-ACC clitics in BP texts consistently increases along this continuum, such that comics and strips show a low frequency of clitics while articles and editorials have the greatest number of these elements. In a future study, it would be very interesting to replicate our work using real data organized according to Bortoni-Ricardo’s *continuum*. In the present text however, as we use introspective data, this approach is not possible.

<sup>3</sup> Ex: Juca odeia matemática e história; Ronaldo encaminhou os formulários ao cliente.

<sup>4</sup> Ex: \*Lúcia jogaram vídeo game no final de semana.

<sup>5</sup> Ex: Os jogador treinou ontem no estádio; Rafaella contou o governo a verdade.

the sentences syntactic-semantic structure and not on the sentences content itself. Moreover, the participants underwent a training session in which they evaluated 4 sentences before starting the task.

### *Procedure*

The procedure to perform the acceptability judgment task was relatively easy. First, the participants were presented to the instructions that explained how they should evaluate the sentences to be presented. Second, they read the commented sentences<sup>6</sup>, which suggested that the participants should focus on the structures used in each sentence and not on their pragmatic content. After that, the participants underwent the training session and started the task. The sentences were presented continuously and the participants rated their acceptability from 1 to 5 (i.e. we use a 5-point Likert Scale). 1 represented the lowest acceptability level, 5 represented the highest acceptability level and the other numbers represented intermediate acceptability.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

The data obtained with the acceptability judgment task was registered and generated with Sona Systems, after that, it was tabulated in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. To perform the statistical analysis, we used the IBM SPSS statistical package version 21. Valid subjects' means across all critical items and items' means across all valid subjects were compiled from the raw data. The data is described in TAB. 1 and the means are illustrated in GRAPH 1.

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<sup>6</sup> These are some of the commented sentences participants read in BP followed by their translation:

**Frase 1 – *Eu me morri amanhã.*** *Eu daria nota 1 para a frase 1. A estrutura da frase soa extremamente estranha para mim. Não consigo sequer entender o sentido do que está sendo dito.*

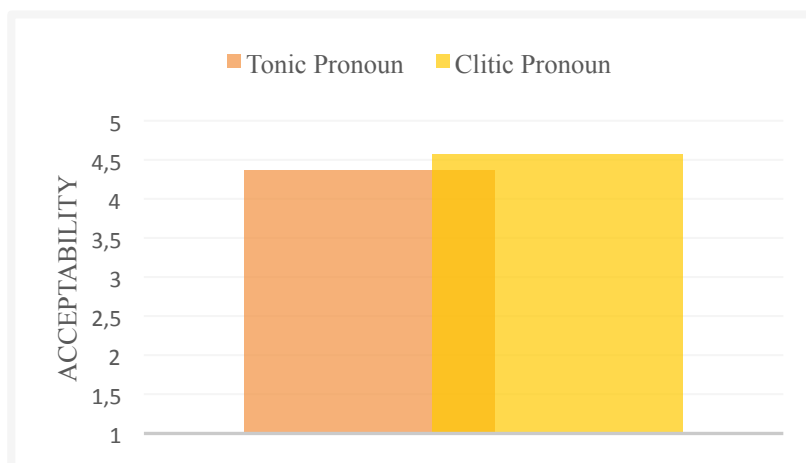
**Sentence 1 – I died myself tomorrow.** I would rate sentence 1 a 1. The structure of the sentence sounds extremely strange to me. I cannot even understand the meaning being conveyed.

**Frase 2 – *O unicórnio foi baleado pela formiga.*** *Eu daria nota 5 para a frase 2. Apesar de o evento descrito não ser comum, a estrutura da frase me parece totalmente aceitável.*

**Sentence 2 – The unicorn was shot by the ant.** I would rate sentence 2 a 5. In spite of the fact that the event being described is not common, the structure of the sentences seems to be totally acceptable.

Pronouns	Mean	Median	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
<b>3P Tonic</b>	4,38	4,63	2,25	5,00
<b>3P-ACC Clitic</b>	4,57	4,75	3,25	5,00

Table 1: Means, median, minimum and maximum scores for 3P-ACC clitics and 3P tonic pronouns.



Graph 1. Acceptability of tonic pronouns (LIST A) and 3P-ACC clitics (LIST B)

The compiled means were tested for normality with the Shapiro-Wilk test. The subjects' means across critical items differed significantly from the normal distribution for both List A ( $W=.783$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and List B ( $W=.838$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The same occurred to items' means across valid subjects for List A ( $W=.814$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and List B ( $W=.695$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Due to the non-normality of the data and the nature of the data (Likert scale), we proceeded with our statistical analysis using non-parametric tests.

In order to reach the goal of our investigation, which was to compare the acceptability of the 3P-ACC clitics with the acceptability of the tonic pronoun, the Mann-Whitney test was performed. The general results, which included the means of all valid subjects, did not yield a significant difference in the judgment of 3P-ACC clitics and tonic pronouns by subjects ( $U=2958$ ,  $W= 6279$ ,  $Z=-1216$ ,  $p=.22$ ), but it did by items ( $U=11$ ,  $W=47$ ,  $Z=-2207$ ,  $p<.03$ ). Both the tonic pronouns and the 3P-ACC clitics were highly accepted by the participants of our study.

We understand that these results indicate that the oral modality influences partially the written modality. On the one hand, the tonic pronouns, which are frequent

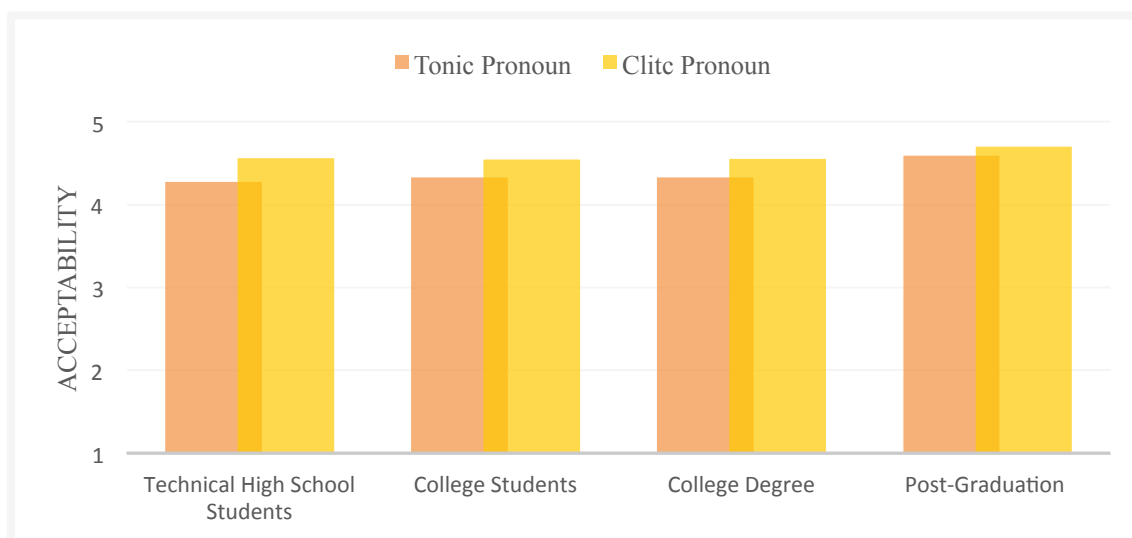
*Diadorim, Rio de Janeiro, Revista 19 — Volume Especial 2017.*

in oral modality (even though far less frequent than the null object, as shown by the referred researches), but not in written modality (at least for texts that follow the grammar of standard BP), had high acceptability. This suggests that the high frequency of these tonic pronouns in oral modality may be capable of enhancing their acceptability in written modality. On the other hand, the 3P-ACC clitics, which are frequent in the written modality (at least for texts that follow the grammar of standard BP), but not in the oral modality, also presented high acceptability. This can be interpreted as evidence that the absence of the clitic pronoun in the oral modality does not interfere in its acceptability in the written modality for people with at least technical high school level of education. Therefore, the results suggest that both pronouns may be suitable for experimental items in readings tasks for this population.

We now proceed with the analysis considering the participants' level of formal education. The results were considerably similar when we compared the different groups. The data from technical high school students did not yield a significant difference by subjects ( $U=139$ ,  $W=239$ ,  $Z=-.231$ ,  $p=.25$ ) and it yielded only a marginally significant difference by items ( $U=14$ ,  $W=50$ ,  $Z=-1899$ ,  $p<.06$ ). The data from college students did not yield a significant difference by subjects ( $U=50$ ,  $W=86$ ,  $Z=-.652$ ,  $p=.52$ ), but it did by items ( $U=12$ ,  $W=48$ ,  $Z=-2100$ ,  $p<.04$ ). The data from people with college degree did not yield a significant difference by subjects ( $U=809.5$ ,  $W=1,799.5$ ,  $Z=-.638$ ,  $p=.52$ ), neither did it by items ( $U=17$ ,  $W=53$ ,  $Z=-1583$ ,  $p=.11$ ). The data from the participants with a complete or incomplete post-graduation degree did not yield a significant difference by subject ( $U=65$ ,  $W=56$ ,  $Z=.00$ ,  $p=1.0$ ), neither did it by items ( $U=16$ ,  $W=52$ ,  $Z=-1694$ ;  $p=.09$ ). Thus, in general the groups did not show a significant difference in acceptability for the sentences with the 3P-ACC clitics and tonic pronouns that we tested, especially in the analysis of subjects as a random factor. The few differences found in the analysis considering the items as a random factor showed that the 3P-ACC clitics had the acceptability a little higher than the tonic pronouns. The results are described in TAB. 2 and the means are illustrated in GRAPH 2.

Groups	Tonic Means	Tonic Medians	Clitic Means	Clitic Medians
Technical High School Students	4.27	4,56	4.56	4,75
College Students	4.33	4,56	4.54	4,63
College Degree	4.33	4,63	4.56	4,75
Post-Graduation	4.60	4,63	4.70	4.81

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviation for 3P-ACC clitics and tonic pronouns according to the level of schooling.



Graph 2. Acceptability judgment means for 3P-ACC clitics and tonic pronouns by participants with different levels of education.

We then conducted the Kruskal-Wallis test to observe if the acceptability of the pronouns varied significantly across the four groups tested. The results for the tonic pronoun did not yield a significant difference by subjects ( $\chi^2=0.468$ ,  $p<.93$ ) and it yielded only a marginally significant difference by items ( $\chi^2=8324$ ,  $p<.06$ ). The results for the 3P-ACC clitics did not yield a significant difference by subjects ( $\chi^2=0.801$ ,  $p=.85$ ), neither did it by items ( $\chi^2=2070$ ,  $p<.56$ ). Thus, our results suggest that both 3P-ACC clitics and tonic pronouns are similarly well accepted by all the education level groups observed.

The fact that 3P-ACC are not frequent in the oral modality does not seem to influence its acceptability in the written modality to a point that it would decrease their ratings in our acceptability judgment task. Their presence in the written modality seems to be enough to guarantee its proper perception by native speakers of BP with at least on going technical high school level of education. The high productivity of tonic pronouns in the oral modality, dissimilarly, seem to extend to the written modality and so these speakers perceive them as well accepted, despite the fact that they are considered to be errors in prescriptive grammars. These results are thus very coherent with the analyses of Kato (2005) and Freire (2011), which claim that schooling can rescue lost forms in orality into literate writing. And we can assume also that both core grammar knowledge G1 and peripheral stylistic knowledge G2 are being consistently applied by the subjects in their evaluations. Therefore, it seems that both 3P-ACC clitics and tonic pronouns can be part of experimental items of reading tasks designed for participants with a level of education ranging from technical high school to post graduation, especially in experiments that do not involve a specific genre, which was the case of our acceptability judgment task.

In face of the empirical reality and most of the analyses about the loss of 3P-ACC in BP, it would not be coherent to assume that the subjects involved in this experiment are employing a single grammatical knowledge that recognizes both clitic and tonic pronouns. As we have discussed in section 2, members of a same community, which represent a single speech community from a sociolinguistic point of view, were divided into two groups, in order to avoid comparison biases. In terms of linguistic competence, our outcomes indicate that the participants are considering two different kinds of knowledge, so that both forms are highly accepted: their native core grammar G1, that generates the tonic form, and the second language-like knowledge of the standard register G2, which allows for the acceptance of clitics. This assumption is compatible with the line of reasoning of Nunes (1993, 2011), and with approaches for individual variation (cf. DORIAN, 1994; HENRY, 2005, and the references cited there), which predicts individual bilingualism, when an individual is proficient in more than one dialect of a given language.

### **3. Conclusion**

The comparability of results obtained through different protocols for data gathering is non-trivial for any long-term scientific enterprise, since they contribute to the

cumulative advancement of knowledge. Our study sought to add to the understanding of the pronominal system in BP and, more specifically, it addressed the discussion about whether 3P-ACC clitics are suitable in linguistics and psycholinguistic experiments.

The fact that 3P-ACC clitics have been seen as unproductive in BP has made some researchers consider these items inadequate for experimental purposes and argue that only 3P tonic pronouns should be used, as discussed in Maia and Lima (2014). However, our results showed that 3P-ACC clitics could be suitable for experimental items of reading tasks, which is in accordance with some previous findings. Corrêa (1991) analyzed several oral and written spontaneous narratives produced by people with different levels of formal education. Her results showed that in the oral narratives, the 3P tonic pronouns are prevalent for the primary and middle school students, but the 3P tonic pronouns and the 3P-ACC clitics are used in the same proportion by the university students. In the written narratives, dissimilarly, the 3P-ACC clitics are prevalent for all the students above middle school and 3P tonic pronouns are almost inexistent among the university students. Furthermore, Maia and Lima (2014) showed that 3P-ACC clitic pronouns are more easily processed than the 3P tonic pronouns by people with a college degree. These results suggest that 3P-ACC clitics are acquired during the process of formal education, whereas the 3P tonic pronouns are acquired in a more natural manner. If Kato (2005) is correct, this can be accounted for as a case of bilingual knowledge, with tonic pronouns being part of the core grammar and ACC clitics as a structure belonging to a marked periphery.

The results yielded by the acceptability judgment task conducted in the present study indicate that both 3P-ACC clitics and 3P tonic pronouns have high acceptability for students with technical high school or higher levels of education. The few significant differences encountered between the two pronouns in analysis of items as random factor favored 3P-ACC clitics. Thus, it is possible to assume that 3P-ACC clitics can be used in the composition of experimental items of reading tasks to be performed by students with higher levels of education. Our results, therefore, also help to validate acceptability judgment tasks whose critical items had 3P-ACC clitics (OLIVEIRA, 2013; 2015; 2016; OLIVEIRA et al., 2017; SOUZA; OLIVEIRA, 2017).

Notwithstanding the relevance of these observations concerning the acceptability of the 3P-ACC clitics and 3P tonic pronouns as direct objects, important questions remain to be answered. If our expectations are correct, the results presented here reflect individual competence for multiple dialects/registers. This in turn implies that the



subjects employed two different types of grammatical knowledge in evaluating structures with clitics and tonic pronouns, structures that belong to different dialectal grammars. Thus, more detailed explorations of whether or not such knowledge is accessed automatically must be conducted. During an acceptability judgment task, participants can rely on their explicit knowledge and, hence, these results do not seem to be reliable evidence of the speakers' implicit knowledge. An experiment focused on the online processing of the 3P-ACC clitics may reveal important information about the presence of these pronouns in the speakers' implicit knowledge. Also, this study does not reveal when 3P-ACC clitics start to be noticed. Therefore, it is important to gather data about the perception of speakers with lower levels of education in order to understand when the 3P-ACC start to be well-accepted.

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## Appendix 1

- Linda fatiou o salmão e comeu ele cru.
- Nilton deu o colégio vários livros.
- Mariana deu sua amiga um livro de contos.
- Marina deu um brinquedo ao garoto.
- Jurema deu um computador ao colégio
- Os menino chegou cedo à escola hoje.
- Jair gosta de tocar guitarra.
- Sérgio falaram Alemão muito bem.
- Erica perdeu o cão e encontrou ele morto.
- Jamil encaminhou o colegiado um e-mail.
- Ricardo encaminhou seu advogado os documentos.
- Ronaldo encaminhou os formulários ao cliente.
- Ronilson encaminhou uma solicitação à prefeitura.
- Os jogador treinou ontem no estádio.
- Juca odeia matemática e história.
- Lúcia jogaram vídeo game no final de semana
- Júlia perdeu o telefone e encontrou ele quebrado.
- Rafaella contou o governo a verdade.
- Daniel contou sua esposa a fofoca.
- Daniela contou um segredo ao professor.
- José contou a história à polícia.
- As amiga comeu pizza no restaurante.
- Úrsula estuda Italiano todos os dias.
- Antônio usaram o computador a noite
- A gata pegou o rato e comeu ele vivo.
- A prefeitura concedeu o clube um prêmio.
- O diretor concedeu as secretárias um aumento.
- Janaína concedeu uma entrevista aos repórteres.
- O presidente concedeu um benefício à universidade.
- As criança brincou na rua pela manhã.
- Adilson fala alemão muito bem.
- Ronaldo gostaram de tocar guitarra.
- Renato comprou a pizza e comeu ela fria.
- Tatiana mostrou o hospital o problema.
- Luzia mostrou a menina as bonecas.
- Lourdes mostrou o projeto ao seu chefe.
- Moacir mostrou uma proposta à empresa.
- Os policial prendeu o criminoso à noite.
- Márcio ama seu irmão e sua irmã.
- Adélia beberam café pela manhã

- Natália gostou do computador e comprou ele novo.
- Tarcísio vendeu o açougue uma geladeira.
- Carlos vendeu seu irmão uma moto.
- Celso vendeu o carro ao irmão.
- Cássio vendeu o carro à concessionária.
- Os turista visitou a lagoa da cidade.
- Tati joga vídeo game aos sábados.
- Tânia odiaram matemática e história
- Eu ensopei a camisa e usei ela molhada.
- Luís enviou o Brasil uma carta.
- Marilda enviou a coordenadora seu projeto.
- O professor enviou os arquivos aos alunos.
- O cliente enviou uma reclamação à fábrica.
- As filha assustou o pai com a notícia.
- Timóteo usa o computador à noite.
- Michel estudaram Italiano todos os dias
- Iara preparou o café e bebeu ele quente.
- O bilionário ofereceu os EUA uma nova fábrica.
- Helena ofereceu os convidados caipirinhas.
- A garçonete ofereceu a sobremesa aos convidados.
- O professor ofereceu um software ao laboratório.
- As vizinha viu o meu cachorro fugir.
- Raimundo toma café pela manhã.
- Linda amaram o irmão e a irmã dela.