

DOES INFLECTION MATTER? A FEW MORE NOTES ON BP INFLECTED INFINITIVES¹

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Abstract:

This chapter argues, mainly based on Brazilian history, that nonfinite inflection (NI) cannot be a just a product of schooling (and not a feature of Brazilian Portuguese), since it is commonly used by mass media and people who speak Standard BP. BP speakers have native judgments on the distribution of NI, and those judgements are not what one would expect if those speakers were following the grammar taught in Brazilian schools, as shown by the experimental results of Modesto and Maia (2017). It is then concluded that results already obtained by the study of NI are scientifically interesting.

Keywords: Generative Grammar, Control, Brazilian Portuguese, Inflected infinitives, Sociolinguistics

Resumo:

Este capítulo argumenta, baseado principalmente na história brasileira, em favor da tese de que a flexão infinitiva (FI) não pode ser apenas um produto da escolarização (e não um traço do português brasileiro), uma vez que é usada pelos veículos de comunicação de massa e por falantes do dialeto “standard”. Falantes de PB têm julgamentos nativos sobre a distribuição da FI. Esses julgamentos não são o que se espera no caso de esses falantes estarem seguindo a gramática ensinada pelas escolas brasileiras, como mostram os resultados experimentais de Modesto e Maia (2017). Concluímos, portanto, que os resultados já obtidos pelo estudo da FI são cientificamente interessantes.

Palavras-chave: Sintaxe gerativa, Controle, português brasileiro, infinitivos flexionados, sociolinguística.

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1. Introduction

Nonfinite inflection (NI from now on) has been treated as a feature of Brazilian Portuguese (BP) by many linguists (CASTILHO, 2014; CASTILHO; CASTILHO, 2012; CINTRA, 1985; ILARI, 1985; LIGHTFOOT, 1991; LEMLE, 1984; MAURER JR., 1968; MILLER, 2002; MODESTO, 2010; PERINI, 1995; QUICOLI, 1996). Perini (1995, p. 199-205), trying to make sense of his judgments about inflected nonfinite complements, gives the examples in (1), among others:

- (1) a. *Os diretores lamentam profundamente não disporem de recursos.*
the directors regret deeply not avail.INF.PL of resources
'The directors feel very bad about not having resources available.'
- b. *?Eles prometeram ao Bira chegarem na hora.*
they promised to Bira arrive.INF.PL at hour
'They promised Bira to arrive on time.'
- c. **Eles queriam muitíssimo ganharem o jogo.*
they wanted vey.much win.INF.PL the game
'They really wanted to win the game.'

Modesto (2010, 2016, to appear) shows that, in fact, Brazilian speakers have systemized the use of NI according to a cross-linguistic distinction: NI is accepted with all intentional verbs, the ones that accept a Partial Control (PC) interpretation; and NI is usually not accepted in complements that can only be interpreted exhaustively (Exhaustive Control, or EC). The judgments provided by Perini in (1) are consonant with those presented by Modesto in the articles just cited. The class of predicates exemplified in (1b) by 'to promise' includes future infinitives like 'to prefer' (*preferir*) 'to desire' (*almejar*). The verb *querer*, 'to want' in BP, is exceptional in this class for behaving as an EC predicate;³ all the others predicates allowing PC:

- (2) a. **O jogador queria jogarem sem uniforme.*
the player wanted.3SG play.INF.PL without uniform
- b. *O jogador preferiu jogarem sem uniforme.*
the player preferred.3SG play.INF.PL without uniform
'The player wanted/preferred (for them) to play without the uniform.'

³ The verb 'to want' has a quirky behavior in many languages, so it would take us too far away from our main topic to discuss in detail here why *querer* behaves as an EC predicate in BP. A discussion of 'to want' in several languages is presented by Grano (2015), to which I refer the reader.

Though the study of NI in BP has resulted in an important confirmation of the distinction between PC and EC, since Modesto (2010) started discussing NI in BP, within the realms of Generative Grammar, he had to defend somehow that NI was worth studying (see MODESTO, 2016, to appear; MODESTO; MAIA, 2017). Mainly, Modesto replies to Rodrigues and Hornstein (2013) (R&H from now on), but many other linguists seem to believe in the arguments discussed (and the ones presupposed) by R&H.

So, in this chapter, I will consider those arguments in detail, discuss them, and (hopefully) show that they are mistaken. R&H's arguments are in fact too simplistic; they assume a history for BP that is either unattested or unbelievable. It is unattested, for instance, that all BP speakers lost NI at any given point in time during Brazilian history (only part of the speakers did). What this means is that, at any time of our history till the present, (at least some) Brazilian children acquire NI from their parents. It may be the case that it is a minority of speakers, but we do not know that, and it would be for R&H to demonstrate it.

Nevertheless, the thesis that inflection is just a product of schooling in Brazil is so widespread that it motivates the writing of these pages. The basic claim here is that what is usually called "cultured BP", a very problematic term, does not exist as an object of study. What exists in fact is the language spoken by some Brazilian people who are usually white, schooled, from a city as opposed to from the countryside, etc. That I-language, which produces the speech of those speakers, should not be confused with either European Portuguese (EP) nor "the official language of Brazil": the grammar taught in Brazilian schools, which reflects a standardized EP, as it was spoken in the beginning of the 20th c.

There seems to be a confusion between terms like "the official language", "cultured BP" with the language actually spoken by what could be called "Standard BP" speakers. In the same manner, some linguists create new (and problematic) terminology like "colloquial BP" to refer to the language spoken by what is usually called "Popular BP" speakers. The problem with careless terminology is that, on one hand, it clouds the point that there are three, not two, vectors in the competition of grammars in Brazil; and, on the other, they cause linguists to ignore part of the available data (the E-language), which compromises the analyses. Data from schooled speakers should not be ignored, just because those speakers went to school. That would not be reasonable. Educated BP speakers do make use of a linguistic system (an I-language) that includes syntactic subject-verb agreement and morphological inflection (including NI). Importantly, their use of inflection does not reflect the rules taught in schools. Schooling may reinforce the use of inflection, but it does not determine where speakers will use it. Modesto and Maia (2017) have shown exactly that: the normal use of NI by "educated speakers of BP" is in control structures, something frowned upon by school grammar. Their experiment shows that BP speakers do not use the grammatical system taught in school when reading inflected infinitives.

Most of what is defended here is supported by socio-historical facts of BP, so the chapter is organized as follows. Section 2 presents a bit of BP's history and considers much sociolinguistic and historical work done on BP; it discusses that Brazil has a polarized linguistic situation, and one of the poles has

its roots in the Classical Portuguese brought to Brasil, which leads to the conclusion that NI has been used for centuries and is still part of the language as a whole today. Then, section 3 talks about NI, still defending the importance of its study, and section 4 offers a conclusion.

2. The definitional problem of BP

There is a definitional problem of BP as an object of inquiry that is especially problematic in generative syntax studies. In order to define BP as a(n I-)language, we must first consider the history of the country and some synchronic socio-political undisputed facts about the language spoken in Brazil, which was produced by that very same history. As is well known, Brazil was a colony of Portugal for nearly 4 centuries, and slavery was implemented during almost all that time. More than four million Africans were brought into Brazil to be slaves, while an also huge number of first inhabitants of Brazil were killed or expelled from their land. It is debatable if any indigenous language affected the Portuguese spoken in Brazil other than having a *substratum* effect on some speakers.

African languages, however, left a huge lexical footprint in Brazilian vocabulary, and maybe even syntactic ones. Any account of BP, therefore, must deal with the question of whether BP forms a continuum with the Portuguese taken there by Portuguese immigrants, approximately during 1650 to 1850; or BP is the product of some historical rupture (creolization); or both. I will argue here for the last possibility. My motivation is to show that aspects of what is usually called Standard BP should not be thrown away from scientific interest, as the result of schooling. Although it is true that some features of Portuguese became obsolete in BP, I will defend here that nonfinite inflection still is a feature of BP in general (as an I-language) and, especially, of what is called here Standard BP: an oral native (I-) language spoken in Brazil (mostly by white people, especially in big cities, as always has been in Brazilian history).

Considering the history of Brazil, the first conceivable possibility is that BP is a product of some degree of creolization (which involves a historical disruption) that has been discussed by many: Faraco (2016), Fiorin and Petter 2009, Guy (1981), Holm (1987), Lucchesi (1994, 2001, 2003, 2007), Lucchesi and Baxter (2006), Lucchesi, Baxter and Ribeiro 2009, Silva Neto (1950), Tarallo (1993b), among many others cited therein.

On one hand, there are authors who assume that BP was heavily influenced by African and Amerindian languages which, therefore, implies a rupture between BP and EP (e.g. GUY 1981); on the other hand, some authors have printed many pages arguing that BP is just a variant of Portuguese, as many alike coexisting today (in Africa and Europe), so there is no real rupture, just continuity and acceleration of characteristics already present in Classical Portuguese (cf. NARO; SCHERRE, 2004). Tarallo (1993a) concludes his chapter saying that all evidence (linguistic and historical) points to the conclusion that “BP is the result of the alteration of PE in contact (and this word is important here) with different ethnic groups and different languages, a situation that does not necessarily leads to creolization, but simply to dialectal differentiation”. Naro and Scherre (2004) also provide convincing argumentation

that there was no need for a Portuguese based creole in Brazil (except for the 100 first years of colonization perhaps) and that many of the *sui generis* characteristics of BP were already present in the speech of 17th and 18th century Portuguese immigrants who came to Brazil.

Some form of creolization would explain the characteristics of today's BP: a tendency to fill the subject positions with overt pronouns, the use of nominative pronouns in place of accusative clitics, and variable agreement in the nominal and verbal domains. However, a possible creolization during the colonial period does not characterize BP as whole: if it happened, it affected only half of the population, the slaves. The language of white Portuguese descendants never suffered any creolization.

Lucchesi's idea that BP is the result of 'defective learning' (cf. LUCCHESI, 2001, 2003; LUCCHESI; BAXTER; RIBEIRO, 2009) also explains BP characteristics and I agree with his ideas most of the time. However, it is hard to miss that BP is also, maybe mainly, a continuation of the 18th c. Portuguese spoken there. Some variety of that white Portuguese has always been spoken in Brazil and the scientific object we presently describe here is exactly that, a variety of (around 1700) European Portuguese, which is still spoken (in Brazil) by the descendants of the Portuguese people who lived there. Such (white) variety is still spoken in Brazil, it cohabits and has always cohabited with the BP spoken by native Brazilians, slaves, and their endogamous descendants. No bigotry is intended here, we are just pointing out a fact about Brazilian society: the gap between rich and poor in Brazil is huge and it applies also in the linguistic sphere, which is a direct effect of our history of slavery.

Though we, as many authors, see clearly two sources for BP, and despite all that contrasting history of the two dialects, we maintain, also as most linguists, that BP is one (I-) language; there is no significant difference between the grammar spoken by white and non-white people in Brazil, except for the variable use of inflection (nominal and verbal). This seems contradictory with what has been said so far, but it is not. The two dialects influenced each other throughout Brazilian history and have been mixed up in the 20th c., as discussed in Modesto and Maia (2017) and the articles cited above, resulting in a plural and polarized sociolinguistic system, but not two different (I-)languages.

Although the use of verbal inflection is variable, for every BP speaker, one should not jump to the conclusion that inflection does not take part in BP considered as a linguistic system. In fact, inflection is used by many and (passively) known by almost all speakers; therefore, it certainly figures in the I-language of those speakers. It matters that, in Brazil, you'll be exposed to a different dialect depending on where you are born: in a rich or in a poor neighborhood, though that has no obvious linguistic consequence as rich and poor speak the same I-language. Note that there is no paradox and no need to claim that inflection has "disappeared" in PB. Inflection (or better, agreement) is there, but its externalization is variable. That is all there is to it. During all periods of Brazilian history, the same linguistic conundrum takes place: the white child must make sense of both their parents' Portuguese and the Portuguese of the slaves (who oversaw the upbringing of white children). Not much have changed: nowadays, some children hear Standard BP from their parents, and popular BP from their nannies or house maids. By the same measure, non-white children had to learn Portuguese based on

variable input (from the colonizers and other slaves), as still is today though there is no more slavery (cf. LUCCHESI, 2007).

The black population in Brazil has always been at least half of the total population throughout the country's history, having exceeded the white population in some periods. At the end of the 19th c., with slavery abolished, and on a confessed mission to make the country whiter, Brazil started accepting immigrants to work in the coffee fields and factures that were rapidly growing in São Paulo State or cattle farms in the South of the country. Asian and European (also Syrian-Lebanese) immigrants produced, in the southern region of the country, a white majority. Today, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE⁴), 48% of Brazilians declare themselves as white, 50% declare themselves as non-white (black or "pardo", a classification used in Brazil for people of mixed race: European, African and Amerindian). Only 0,7 declare themselves as Brazilian Indians and 1,3% declare themselves as Asians.

Despite all that social inequality and antagonizing history, linguistically speaking, Brazil is very democratic. There seems to be no clear distinction in language use of the white and black populations in Brazil. There is also no clear boundary between white and black's skin color in Brazil. All BP speakers speak the same language, though they vary, according to sociolinguistics attested variables regulating BP.

Since the topic of research presented here is 'nonfinite inflection', and inflection is one of the variable features of BP (both in nominal and verbal contexts), some linguists have expressed the belief that data on NI would be not "scientifically interesting". In the remaining of this chapter, I will argue against such belief. As just discussed, BP is the product of the fusion between a white Portuguese brought by the colonizers but that kept being spoken in Brazil independently of the Portuguese spoken in Portugal, and a black Portuguese spoken by African slaves and their descendants. Although the resulting language is just one I-language, its definition is difficult, due to the plural and polarized linguistic system that formed in Brazil in consequence to its history.

In conclusion, the definitional problem of BP relates to the fact that there is a lot of variance among BP speakers. BP is the mixed-race child of the Portuguese spoken by white people and many other non-white spoken languages. That creates the definitional problem: when considering BP as an I-language, should I consider myself as the chomskyan ideal speaker of BP (cf. Chomsky 1965)? That would possibly give me a much whiter grammar than if I had chosen another BP speaker as my informant. Although terms like white-BP and black-BP are not applicable to the Brazilian reality, a fact agreed by most linguists is that the BP linguistic community is polarized between two sociolinguistic norms, usually called Popular and Standard BP.⁵

4 Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (<http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/>).

5 Lucchesi 1994 and Mattos and Silva 2004 have assumed that there is a polarization of BP speakers, which seems unavoidable given the Brazilian history and socio-political situation, but does not implicate the existence of two different I-languages: "PB is not only *heterogeneous* and *variable* but also *plural* and *polarized*" (Lucchesi 1994: 27). The polarization, according to those authors, is between a "cultured norm" and a "vernacular norm" (once again, very problematic terms): "the patterns of use of the schooled segments of society, of speakers of middle and upper classes, tend to lose characteristics that are related to the European original, and the vernacular norm tend to acquire characteristics that bring it close to the cultured norm, in a process of convergence, but with clear differences in the patters of use and the systems of values associated to those patterns."

According to Galves (2007), BP and modern EP originate from Medio Portuguese (a reinterpretation of Classical Portuguese, lasting from the 15th to the 18th centuries). EP is formed after a prosodic change made clitics become enclitic in most matrix contexts (cf. GALVES; SÂNDALO, 2012; GALVES; BRITTO; PAIXÃO DE SOUZA, 2005). BP, on the other hand, kept at least two features that characterized Medio Portuguese, as Galves (2007) points out in a footnote:

“It must be noted that BP shares at least two superficial syntactic features with Medio Portuguese. The first and more visible is the use of proclisis in the contexts defined above, which distinguishes both from Modern EP and Archaic Portuguese [...]. The second, less obvious, is the fact that the preverbal position is not exclusive for the subject, understood as the external argument of the verb, but it can be filled by any constituent of VP. Following the seminal work of Eunice Pontes [(1987)], many papers have stated the topic-language character of BP (cf. GALVES, 1987 and NEGRÃO, 1999, among others). Medio Portuguese may also be characterized as a topic language in the sense that the element in preverbal position is not obligatorily the subject, as in the subject languages.” (GALVES, 2007, fn. 10)

Galves argues that, already in the 18th century, evidence of a Brazilian grammar can be found in texts (also see FARACO, 2016; GALVES; BRITTO; PAIXÃO de SOUZA, 2005; GALVES; MORAES; RIBEIRO, 2005; PAGOTTO, 1992) with respect to clitic position, and that “such a fact strongly suggests that BP is already in the mind of 18th Brazilians and that the change in Portugal will not affect the acquisition [of BP] by future generations. Its role in fact will be limited to modifying the prestige norm, and to introduce a third vector in the competition of grammars instantiated in the texts...” (GALVES, 2007, p. 525).

It is important to understand what Galves meant by “prestige norm” and why it is a third, not a second, vector in the competition of grammars instantiated in texts. The “prestige norm” in the 19th c. in Brazil was the norm spoken by the Portuguese court who had moved to Rio de Janeiro. From what has been said up to now, it is easy to see that most Brazilians, including the white descendants of Portuguese people, did not speak like the courtesans. So, there were three “Portugueses”: 1. the Portuguese of the court (basically, EP spoken in Brazil); 2. The Portuguese spoken by white, rich people throughout Brazil (even nobles); and 3. The Portuguese of non-white people. We can talk about a spoken Standard BP today as the continuation of Portuguese number 2 (in a very simplistic, but real, manner).

Paixão de Souza (2010, p. 118) states “fundamentally, in the traditional view [...] there is one Brazilian Portuguese that is direct genetic result of the classical language of the 16th century, and there is another Brazilian Portuguese that resulted from the contact of that language with non-Portuguese-speaking

(our translation, Mattos e Silva (2004: 49)). Lucchesi (1994: 27) also says “However conceiving Brazilian Portuguese as a heterogeneous and variable system, I defend that it may not be analyzed as a unitary system, but as a plural system, more precisely a diasystem, constituted by at least two subsystems themselves heterogeneous and variable, which I have defined here as norms [cultured and vernacular].” (Lucchesi 1994: 27). Note that, for both authors, the cultured norm is not the school grammar.

populations. The former is the “cultured” Portuguese (fundamentally, a “white” Portuguese)...” (my translation). Leaving all the important sociolinguistic implications aside, the important message of those passage is that there is in fact one BP which descend from Medio Portuguese and there is another BP that may or may not have been creolized. Mattos e Silva (2004) makes the same point: “from the 18th c. on [...], especially in the urban concentrations that were already there [in Brazil], there was a clash of two possibilities: an Africanized Portuguese or an Europeanized one.” (my translation of MATTOS e SILVA, 2004: 21)

Since standard and popular BP have been influencing each other for centuries, it became the task of linguists during the last part of the 20th century to investigate what exactly was “standard BP” and there seems to be consensus on the fact that this internalized variety is very different from normative-grammar-Portuguese. It is also consensual, in my view, that the standard dialect suffered some loss of morphology related to the appropriation of the form *Vossa Mercê*, which takes 3rd person agreement, shortened to *você*, as the 2nd person pronoun (in both numbers). The expression *a gente* (lit. ‘the people’) also famously occurs besides the pronoun *nós* in contemporary BP, taking 3rd person singular inflection. This morphological loss may or may not be involved in a parametric change. In fact, the negative is much more likely. It makes much more sense to think that BP is already born with variable morphology, which causes a negative characterization of BP as a pro-drop language of the romance kind, by its speakers. Since the Portuguese brought to Brazil was a topic-prominent language (cf. GALVES, 2007, discussed above), besides being a null-subject language of the romance kind, it is easy to imagine that the first BP speakers could not interpret those empty categories based on morphology alone (since half of the BP speakers probably had very little morphology), so Brazilians started using topics as the binders of those null categories (as defended in MODESTO, 2008). In this way, BP is borne already as a null-subject language of the Southeast Asian kind (think Chinese or Thai). That, it seems to me, is the most plausible analysis.

Referring to a “weaking of Agr”, after Galves (1993), as a parametric change of the end of the 19th c. seems to be misguided. Mainly based on Duarte (1993, 1995), many Brazilian linguists seem to believe that BP is becoming a language with less and less verbal inflection, when, in fact, many Brazilian sociolinguists are showing (see MENDES; OUSHIRO, 2015 for a review; also see DUARTE, 2012) that inflection is at least stable in BP, probably on a rise, as education and mass media flood in remote areas and people ascend socially. In order to maintain that BP became a non-pro-drop language in the turn of the 20th century, we would have to imagine that BP was spoken as a null-subject language (of the romance kind) for at least two centuries. Obviously, this can only be theorized to be true about Portuguese descendants, so the Portuguese spoken by African descendants follows a different timeline. All information we have leads us to expect that the Portuguese spoken by Africans and their descendants had already a very impoverished verbal paradigm since the 17th century. If there was interaction between Portuguese immigrants and African slaves (and we know there has been, since in the general case white children had African nannies), the language spoken by Portuguese immigrants and African descendants, in interaction, could not remain a null-subject language of the romance kind for very long (since the African-Portuguese spoken by slaves had practically no morphology). The same point is made in different ways by Borges and Pires (2017). This means that even the Portuguese spoken by white people could not remain pro-drop until the end of the 19th century.

Since Modesto (2010, 2016) took up describing and studying the use of inflected infinitives in BP, several critics have raised questions about such study, so I would like to address them now. In the cited works, Modesto claims that infinitives are obligatorily inflected in some contexts in the standard dialect of BP. Surprisingly, reference to a standard dialect of BP caused much misunderstanding among Brazilian linguists. Some critics claimed that the status of Standard BP as an I-language is not clear; that it may be more the case that it represents an abstract construct containing some linguistic facts attributed to “cultured” people than a natural language, in the sense of an internalized grammar acquired in infancy. Several studies about variation of morphological agreement in BP, the critics continue, show that the difference between the “cultured” and the “popular” norm has to do with frequencies of use more than categorical contrasts; so both cultured and popular speakers show the same variation w.r.t realization of morphology, with different frequencies, which supposedly would show that the crucial factors about such variation are extra-linguistic: access to schooling, more frequent contact with written forms of language, more social pressure, etc. If that is true, the supposed need of agreement mentioned by Modesto (2010) is a peripheral fact about BP (in the sense of periphery of core grammar, as in Chomsky 1981). That seems to be the logic used by R&H, who argue that inflection on infinitives is a kind of target to Brazilian speakers and not a variant about which any speaker could have real (I-language) judgments (so MODESTO, 2010’s data should not be taken as “representative” of BP).

However, allusion to terms like “core grammar” is tricky in this context, since we do not really know what that concept is. According to Bickerton (2014: 25-26), “there is a brief mention in the introduction to Chomsky (1981) of a distinction between “core” grammar (which UG must account for) and a “periphery” of idiosyncratic constructions (which presumably need not). But no such distinction has ever been formalized or even explicitly stated.” Of course, I would agree that some things learnt in school are peripheral in BP – as accusative 3rd person clitics, which are almost completely absent from oral language. However, inflected infinitives can hardly be compared to accusative clitics, as I have shown elsewhere (MODESTO; MAIA, 2017): they have not been substituted by another form, NI just ceased to be pronounced by some speakers. There is no difference in the production of more and less inflecting speakers whether nonfinite inflection licenses overt subjects, for instance, see (3) below. As for I-language, it may well be the case that all BP have nonfinite agreement, even non-inflecting speakers.

(3) a. *Eu fico contente de vocês ficar aqui.*

I stay happy of you.PL stay.INF.Ø here.

‘I am glad you guys stay here/are staying here.’

b. *Eu fico contente de vocês ficarem aqui.*

I stay happy of you.PL stay.INF.PL here.

‘I am glad you guys stay here/are staying here.’

Summing up the problem: when considering BP grammar, which grammar do you consider, the one with or the one without inflection? If inflection was in fact an artifact of schooling, as R&H argue, BP speakers should not have converging judgments about inflection that differ from the set of rules taught in school, which is what happens with NI. As Modesto and Maia (2017) have shown, BP speakers treat the null category in subject position of inflected nonfinite verbs as controlled PRO, which goes against the rules they learnt in school. Consider some of Modesto and Maia's test sentences:

(4) a. *Só quando os bebês foram examinados os cuidadores perceberam terem sujado as fraldas.*

only when the babies were examined the caretakers notice.PL have.INF.PL dirtied the diapers

'Only when the babies were examined, the caretakers noticed that they had soiled the diapers.'

b. *Como chegaram logo ao local da queda, os bombeiros julgaram terem salvo muitas vidas.*

as arrived.PL soon to.the place of crash the firemen reckoned have.INF.PL saved many lives

'Having arrived quickly to the crash site, the firemen reckoned they have saved many lives.'

Sentence (4a) forces the reader to take the null subject of *terem* as 'the babies', while there is no other possible referent than 'the firemen' in (4b), forcing a control interpretation. The former is possible in EP (and therefore it is sanctioned by school grammar), while the latter is considered sub-standard (in EP and Brazilian school grammar). Brazilian test subjects, however, took longer to read, with more regressive movement and longer fixations, sentences like (4a) in comparison with (4b). That clearly indicates that schooled speakers (like myself) do not follow the normative grammar taught in school when speaking or giving grammaticality judgments. Two facts must be clear. Firstly, taking my own judgments as representative of BP in general does not exclude speakers who use inflection less frequently, while the opposite is not true; and secondly, the norm spoken by an idealized middle-class BP speaker is not equal to normative Portuguese (the grammar taught at Brazilian schools, which is very close to EP grammar), although one of the main characteristics of that middle-class BP is the more frequent use of inflection (compared to popular speakers). Sentences like (4b) were pointed out to exist by (at least) Maurer Jr. (1968) and Lemle (1984), before they were tested by Modesto and Maia (2017).

Making no difference between written BP and Standard oral BP is also a big mistake: written BP allows referential null subjects much more freely than standard spoken BP (among other differences). The confusion is dangerous because it misleads one to take Standard BP not to exist as a spoken language, exactly as R&H mistakenly do.

3. Nonfinite Inflection

Working with written BP corpora, Canever (2012)⁶ describes nonfinite inflection being used in 75% of adjunct nonfinite clauses (final, causal and temporal), 89,4% in adjectival complements and 94.5% in nominal complements, which are the contexts in which nonfinite inflection is optional in Standard BP.⁷ On contexts which Modesto (2010) had judged ungrammatical with inflection, Canever (2013) found one occurrence of nonfinite inflection (0.3% of the total) in the complement of modal verbs, and 5.1% of inflection in the complement of aspectual verbs (verbs corresponding to ‘to start’, ‘to continue’, etc.). These results are consistent with the judgments discussed in Modesto 2010: the complement of exhaustive control (EC) predicates is (usually) not inflected in BP. The occurrence of inflection in those contexts may be dismissed as being product of a hyper-correction mechanism in which a speaker overuses some language mechanism (when writing) because of his/her impressions about social linguistic norms. However, five percent seems a little high and, importantly, inflection in those contexts is used in speech from time to time (so, rarely). For those reasons, I will assume here that there is nothing wrong with an exhaustive complement inflecting; they just usually do not⁸ (but may inflect for some speakers in some contexts). Even when a nonfinite verb is inflected in those EC contexts, no PC interpretation obtains, as expected, so there is little interest in investigating inflection occurring there. In PC contexts, nonfinite inflection occurs freely, either with a PC or an EC interpretation – and inflection is not required to give rise to a PC interpretation when the verb lexically implies a plural subject (see MODESTO, to appear, for a full description of inflected nonfinite complements in PB).

Modesto (2010, to appear) shows that inflected infinitives are not non-obligatory Control (NOC) contexts (as R&H claimed) and argue that they are obligatorily controlled (OC), since their antecedent must be local, it must c-command the nonfinite clause, are interpreted as having a sloppy reading in VP ellipsis contexts; give rise to a de se reading only, which give rise to ‘epistemic privacy’ (cf. FODOR 1975). The difference in speaker’s judgment concerning NOC and OC control interpretations of inflected infinitives was investigated by Modesto and Maia (2017) with an eye-tracking experiment. They concluded that “a control interpretation of null subjects of inflected nonfinite clauses is not only psychologically real in BP, but it is actually the preferred option in a task in which a strict comparison with arbitrary PRO is entertained.” Their experiment shows that BP speakers read and understand controlled inflected infinitives much faster and easier than NOC inflected infinitives (i.e. inflected infinitives in a context that suggests a NOC interpretation).

The previous discussion have shown that all BP speakers use variable agreement in nominal (see (5)), finite verbal contexts (6), and nonfinite verbal contexts (7). Differently from the nominal case, which is variable for every speaker more equally, verbal agreement in BP divides BP speakers in two groups: inflecting speakers, those who use the option without agreement, option b in (6) and (7), much less

6 Canever’s corpus is composed of formal written BP, but it should not be dismissed as disinteresting for that reason.

7 Canever (2017) finds a much lower percentage of inflection with a larger corpus of academic works (around 25% for most optional contexts). Still, she demonstrates that nonfinite inflection is in fact spreading to contexts that did not allow inflection before in BP.

8 Modesto (2016) explains the preference for not inflecting EC complements as a restructuring phenomenon: EC complements are restructuring contexts and, in BP, restructuring complements usually do not contain a T projection, explaining the lack of agreement. I refer the reader to the cited text for empirical arguments.

frequently than the option with agreement; and less-inflecting speakers, who either have no morphology for number inflection in their system or just use them infrequently. If you ask a BP speaker on the street whether (6b) and (7b) are acceptable (grammatical), they will probably say no, due to schooling. However, those speakers do not spell out inflection 100% of the time in speech. It is also clear that (5b), (6b) and (7b) are absent from mass communication media like TV, radio and newspapers.

- (5) a. *Esses alunos são inteligentes.*
 this.pl student.PL are intelligent.PL
- b. *Esses aluno são inteligente.*
 this.pl student.Ø are intelligent.Ø
 ‘These students are intelligent.’
- (6) a. *Eles chegaram.*
 they arrive.PST.3PL
- b. *(*Eles chegou.*
 they arrive.PST.Ø
 ‘They arrived.’
- (7) a. *Não adianta eles se preocuparem Com isso.*
 not works they REFL worry.INF.PL With it
- b. *(*Não adianta eles se preocupar Com isso.*
 not works they REFL worry.INF.Ø with it
 ‘It is useless for them to worry about it.’

I have defended so far that (7a) must be considered a valid datum of BP, which seems obvious; therefore, NI must be a feature of BP and must be studied. NI is a serious problem for some theories of syntactic Control (the ones involving syntactic movement): in PC structures, the mismatch between PRO and controller could not be produced by a movement operation. Big-DP analyses in this case, like Rodrigues (2007), would just complicate a matter that seems consensual; that control involves either anaphoricity or some form of variable binding, not DP-movement (see LANDAU 2013, 2015 for a comprehensive discussion on Control).

Since number valuation does not affect Control in BP, it would make sense to use the theory described in Miyagawa (2010) in which phi-features may not form a bundle inherited by T in every language. Only number seems to reach T in BP; person is not valued in T (it is not inherited by T), staying in the C domain. That would explain why number inflection may be used to give PC readings to Control structures in BP. To sketch an analysis, consider the three structures that follow from the reasoning just given: T inherits only [number] from C. To value the feature [person], some category with valued features must be internally or externally merged in a position within an exploded CP:

- (8) a. $[_{CP} DP_1 [_{TP} t_1 [t_1]]]$
- b. $[_{CP} DP_1 [_{TP} ec_2 [t_2]]]$
- c. $[_{CP} ec_2 [_{TP} ec_2 [t_2]]]$

In (8b), the empty category (*ec*) in spec, TP is most likely a null pronoun (or a minimal pronoun in the sense of KRATZER, 2009), though other theoretical possibilities arise (a null NP, etc.). The structure (8b) is intended to account for what has been called “double subjects” in BP, in which the pronominal subject is obligatorily bound by a dislocated topic, as in (9):

(9) *Essa competência, ela é de natureza mental.*

that competence she is of nature mental

‘This competence is of mental nature.’

Naturally, a null pronoun or a bound minimal pronoun would give us the same structure as (9) above, but with a null subject; structure (08a) then accounts for thetic judgments (assuming, as KURODA, 1972; 1990, that the categorial/thetic distinction is realized syntactically). Turning finally to (8c), a minimal pronoun would possibly value the number feature of T, but would not value [person] in C if moved there. Binding of that *ec* will then bore a control interpretation (assuming *ipsis literis* the theory in LANDAY, 2015). The idea that subjects in BP occupy a higher structural position (than subjects in other Indo-European languages) can be seen in Figueiredo Silva (1996), Galves (1993), and Modesto (2000); this idea was used by Modesto (2008) to explain the availability of null referential subjects in embedded clauses in BP: being in this non-argumental position, subjects could form topic-chains and delete under identity. This analysis would also explain topic-subjects like those in (10a), now a classic example, and other raised subjects like (10b, c), already discussed by Pontes (1987), among other people:

(10) a. *Essas casas batem muito sol.*

these houses shine much sun

‘These houses get much sunlight.’

b. *Essa geladeira cabe muita coisa.*

This fridge fits much thing

‘This fridge is spacious.’

c. *A camisa do Edu caiu o botão.*

the shirt of.the Edu fell the button

‘Edu’s shirt lost a button.’

4. Conclusion

I have argued here, mainly based on Brazilian history and common sense, that NI cannot be a just a product of schooling in BP, since it is used in speech by people who speak Standard BP and it is imposed by mass media. BP speakers do have native judgments on NI and its distribution. Those judgements are not what one would expect if those speakers were following the grammar taught in Brazilian schools, as shown by the experimental results of Modesto and Maia (2017). Therefore, NI in BP should keep being studied. It has already shown (Modesto 2016, in press) that movement analyses of Control cannot explain BP data, and that PC is a real cross-linguistically syntactic fact (in consonance with LANDAU, 2015). Those results are very significant for linguistic theory and the description of BP.

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